



US007357488B2

(12) **United States Patent**
Silverbrook

(10) **Patent No.:** **US 7,357,488 B2**
(45) **Date of Patent:** ***Apr. 15, 2008**

(54) **NOZZLE ASSEMBLY INCORPORATING A SHUTTERED ACTUATION MECHANISM**

(75) Inventor: **Kia Silverbrook**, Balmain (AU)

(73) Assignee: **Silverbrook Research Pty Ltd**,
Balmain, New South Wales (AU)

(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 0 days.

This patent is subject to a terminal disclaimer.

(21) Appl. No.: **11/604,319**

(22) Filed: **Nov. 27, 2006**

(65) **Prior Publication Data**

US 2007/0070124 A1 Mar. 29, 2007

Related U.S. Application Data

(63) Continuation of application No. 11/442,176, filed on May 30, 2006, now Pat. No. 7,152,960, which is a continuation of application No. 10/884,887, filed on Jul. 6, 2004, now Pat. No. 7,140,719, which is a continuation of application No. 10/693,947, filed on Oct. 28, 2003, now Pat. No. 6,783,217, which is a continuation of application No. 10/302,606, filed on Nov. 23, 2002, now Pat. No. 6,644,767, which is a continuation of application No. 09/855,094, filed on May 14, 2001, now Pat. No. 6,485,123, which is a continuation-in-part of application No. 09/112,815, filed on Jul. 10, 1998, now Pat. No. 6,247,792.

(30) **Foreign Application Priority Data**

Jul. 15, 1997 (AU) PO7991
Jul. 15, 1997 (AU) PO8001

(51) **Int. Cl.**
B41J 2/04 (2006.01)
B41J 2/05 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **347/54; 347/65**

(58) **Field of Classification Search** **347/54, 347/65**

See application file for complete search history.

(56) **References Cited**

U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS

4,007,464 A 2/1977 Bassous et al.

(Continued)

FOREIGN PATENT DOCUMENTS

DE 1648322 A 3/1971

(Continued)

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Noworolski, J. Mark et al, "Process for in-plane and out-of-plane single-crystal-silicon thermal microactuators". Sensors and Actuators, A, CH, Elsevier Sequoia S.A., Lausanne, vol. 55, No. 1, Jul. 15, 1996, pp. 65-69, XP004077979 ISSN: 0924-4247.

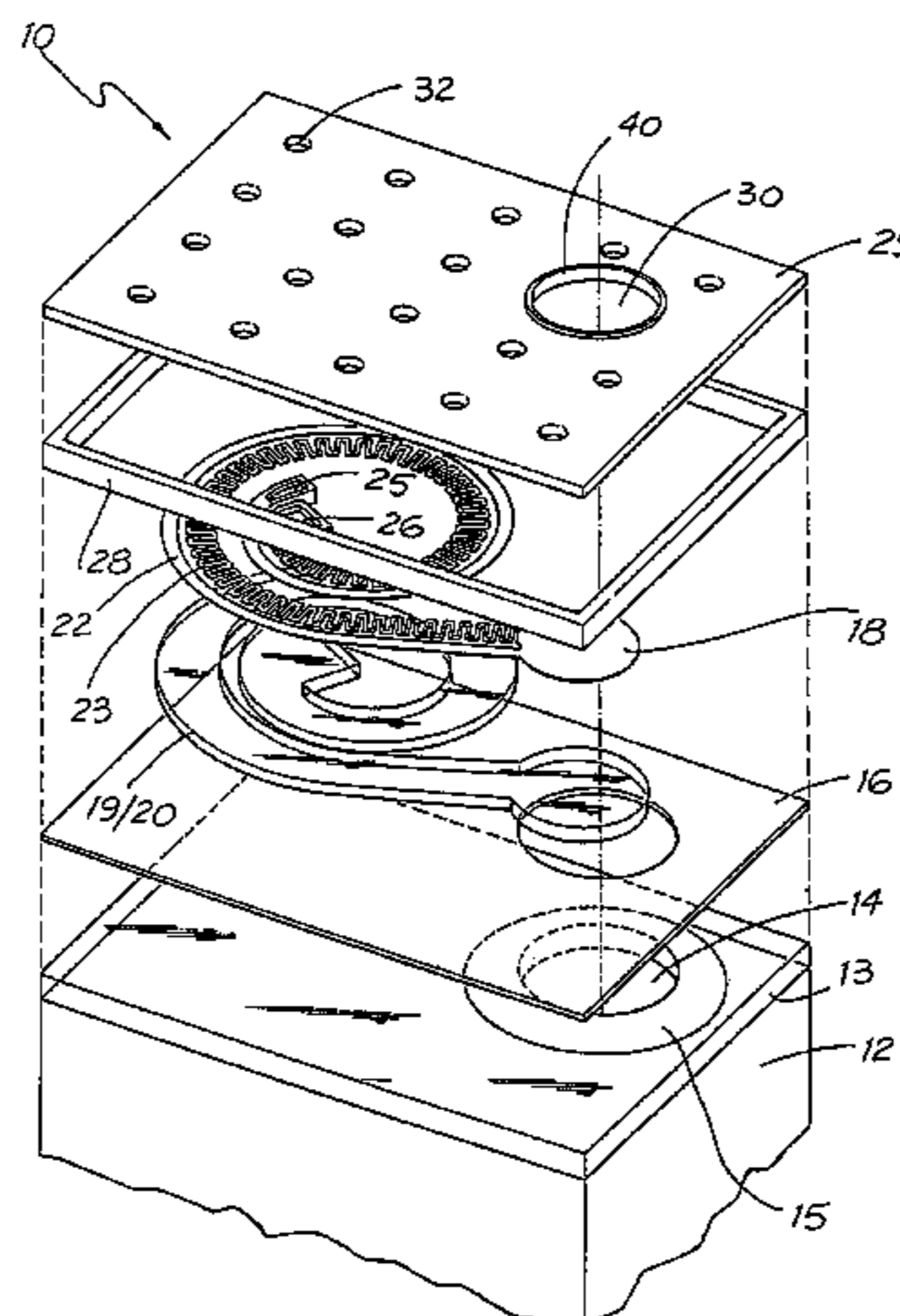
(Continued)

Primary Examiner—An H. Do

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A nozzle assembly is provided for an inkjet printer. The assembly includes a wafer arrangement defining an ink supply channel. A border is constructed on the wafer arrangement and bounds the ink supply channel. A cover layer is constructed on the border to define a nozzle chamber. The cover layer also defines an ink ejection port in fluid communication with the nozzle chamber. A shutter arrangement is constructed on the wafer arrangement and within the border. The shutter arrangement includes a thermal actuator which terminates in a shutter. The thermal actuator includes a coiled heater which, in use, can move the shutter with respect to the ink ejection port.

8 Claims, 9 Drawing Sheets



U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS

4,423,401	A	12/1983	Mueller	
4,458,255	A	7/1984	Giles	
4,553,393	A	11/1985	Ruoff	
4,672,398	A	6/1987	Kuwabara et al.	
4,737,802	A	4/1988	Mielke	
4,812,792	A	3/1989	Leibowitz	
4,855,567	A	8/1989	Mueller	
4,864,824	A	9/1989	Gabriel et al.	
5,029,805	A	7/1991	Albarda et al.	
5,058,856	A	10/1991	Gordon et al.	
5,255,016	A	10/1993	Usui et al.	
5,258,774	A	11/1993	Rogers	
5,612,723	A	3/1997	Shimura et al.	
5,666,141	A	9/1997	Matoba et al.	
5,719,604	A	2/1998	Inui et al.	
5,781,331	A	7/1998	Carr et al.	
5,812,159	A	9/1998	Anagnostopoulos et al.	
5,825,275	A	10/1998	Wuttig et al.	
5,828,394	A	10/1998	Khuri-Yakub et al.	
6,003,977	A	12/1999	Weber et al.	
6,062,681	A	5/2000	Field et al.	
6,174,050	B1	1/2001	Kashino et al.	
6,247,792	B1 *	6/2001	Silverbrook	347/54
6,485,123	B2	11/2002	Silverbrook	
6,644,767	B2 *	11/2003	Silverbrook	347/11
6,783,217	B2	8/2004	Silverbrook	
2004/0257403	A1	12/2004	Silverbrook	

FOREIGN PATENT DOCUMENTS

DE	2905063	8/1980
DE	3245283 A	6/1984
DE	3430155 A	2/1986
DE	3716996 A	12/1988
DE	3934280 A	4/1990
DE	4328433 A	3/1995
DE	19516997 A	11/1995
DE	19517969 A	11/1995
DE	19532913 A	3/1996
DE	19623620 A1	12/1996
DE	19639717 A	4/1997
EP	0092229 A	10/1983
EP	0398031 A	11/1990
EP	0416540 A2	3/1991
EP	0427291 A	5/1991
EP	0431338 A	6/1991
EP	0478956	4/1992
EP	0506232 A	9/1992
EP	0510648 A	10/1992
EP	0627314 A	12/1994
EP	0634273 A2	1/1995
EP	0713774 A2	5/1996

EP	0737580 A	10/1996
EP	0750993 A	1/1997
EP	0882590 A	12/1998
FR	2231076	12/1974
GB	792145 A	3/1958
GB	1428239 A	3/1976
GB	2262152 A	6/1993
JP	58-112747 A	7/1983
JP	58-116165 A	7/1983
JP	61-025849 A	2/1986
JP	61-268453 A	11/1986
JP	01-105746 A	4/1989
JP	01-115639 A	5/1989
JP	01-128839 A	5/1989
JP	01-257058 A	10/1989
JP	01-306254 A	12/1989
JP	02-050841 A	2/1990
JP	02-092643 A	4/1990
JP	02-108544 A	4/1990
JP	02-158348 A	6/1990
JP	02-162049 A	6/1990
JP	02-265752 A	10/1990
JP	03-065348 A	3/1991
JP	03-112662 A	5/1991
JP	03-180350 A	8/1991
JP	04-001051 A	1/1992
JP	04-118241 A	4/1992
JP	04-126255 A	4/1992
JP	04-141429 A	5/1992
JP	04-353458 A	12/1992
JP	04-368851 A	12/1992
JP	05-284765 A	10/1993
JP	05-318724 A	12/1993
JP	06-091865 A	4/1994
JP	06-091866 A	4/1994
JP	07-314665 A	12/1995
JP	2000-141656 A	5/2000
WO	WO 94/18010 A	8/1994
WO	WO 97/12689 A	4/1997

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Ataka, Manabu et al, "Fabrication and Operation of Polymide Bimorph Actuators for Ciliary Motion System". Journal of Microelectromechanical Systems, US, IEEE Inc. New York, vol. 2, No. 4, Dec. 1, 1993, pp. 146-150, XP000443412, ISSN: 1057-7157.
 Yamagata, Yutaka et al, "A Micro Mobile Mechanism Using Thermal Expansion and its Theoretical Analysis". Proceeding of the workshop on micro electro mechanical systems (MEMS), US, New York, IEEE, vol. Workshop 7, Jan. 25, 1994, pp. 142-147, XP000528408, ISBN: 0 7803 1834-X.

* cited by examiner

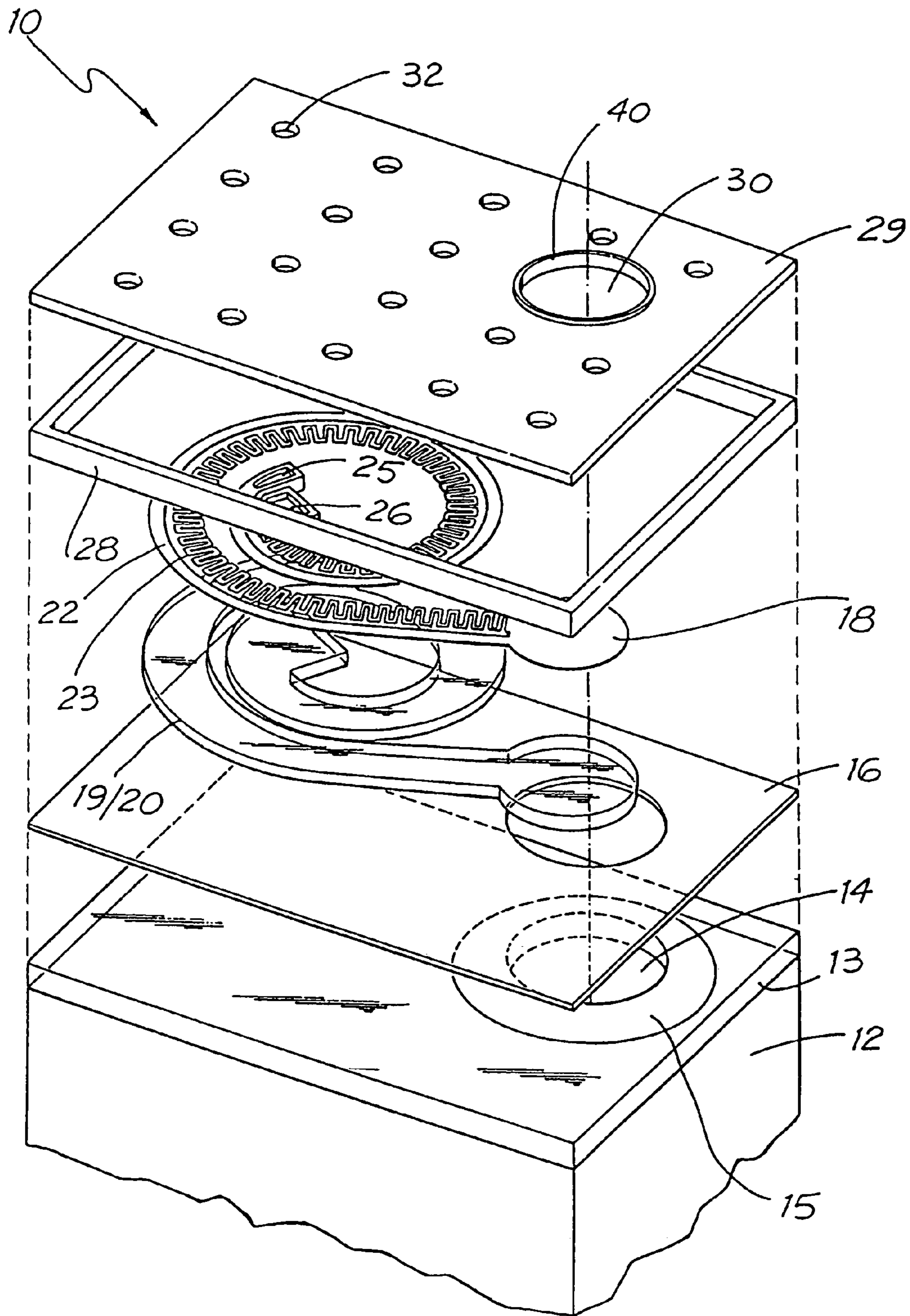


FIG. 1

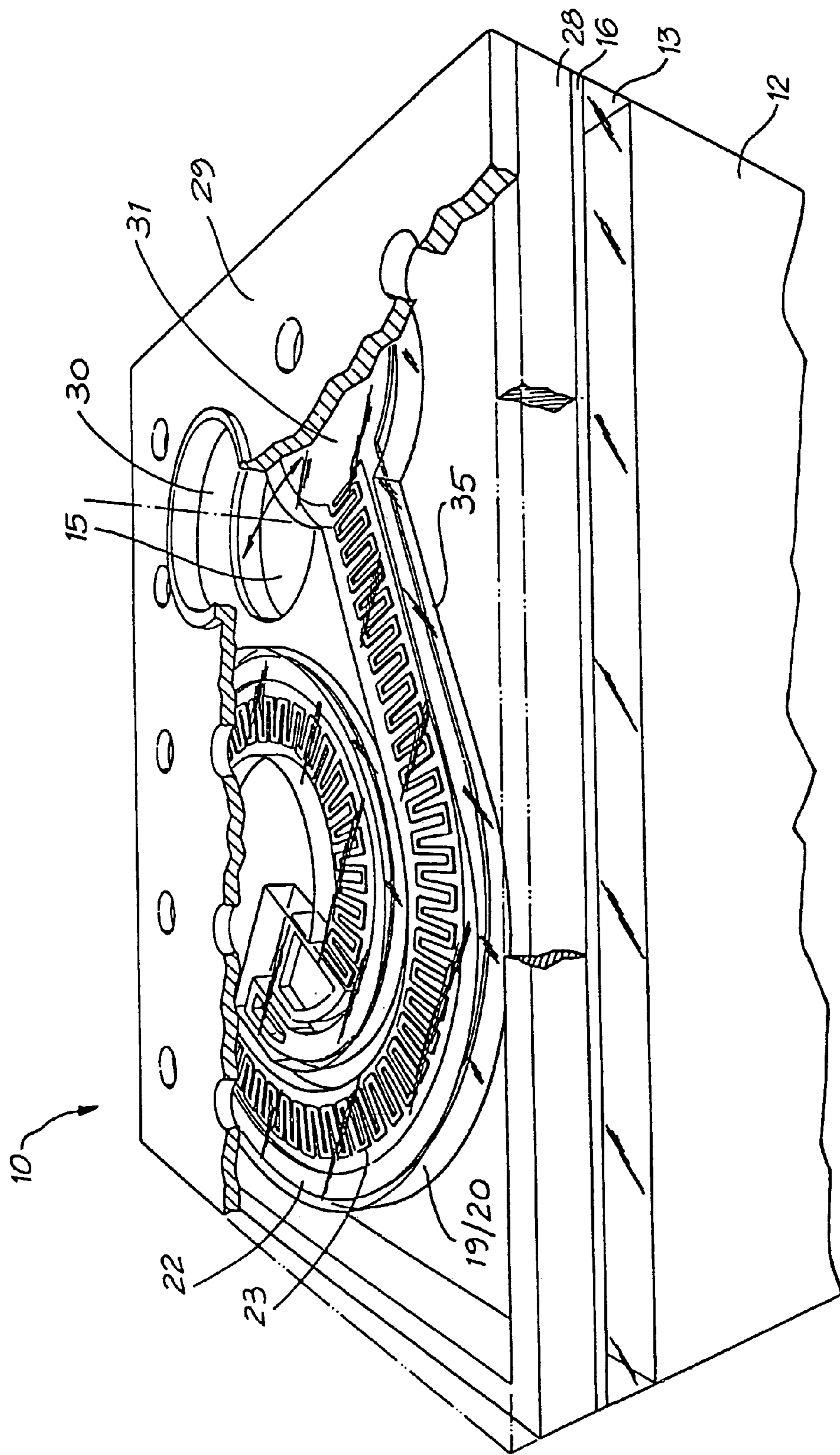


FIG. 2






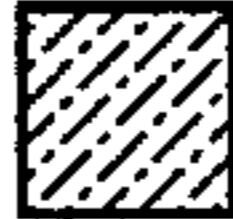



















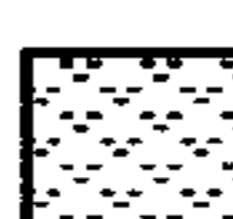
	Silicon		Sacrificial material		Elastomer
	Boron doped silicon		Cupronickel		Polyimide
	Silicon nitride (Si_3N_4)		CoNiFe or NiFe		Indium tin oxide (ITO)
	CMOS device region		Permanent magnet		PTFE
	Aluminum		Polysilicon		Conductive PTFE
	Glass (SiO_2)		Titanium Nitride (TiN)		Terfenol-D
	Copper		Titanium boride (TiB_2)		Shape memory alloy
	Gold		Adhesive		Tantalum
			Resist		Ink

FIG. 3

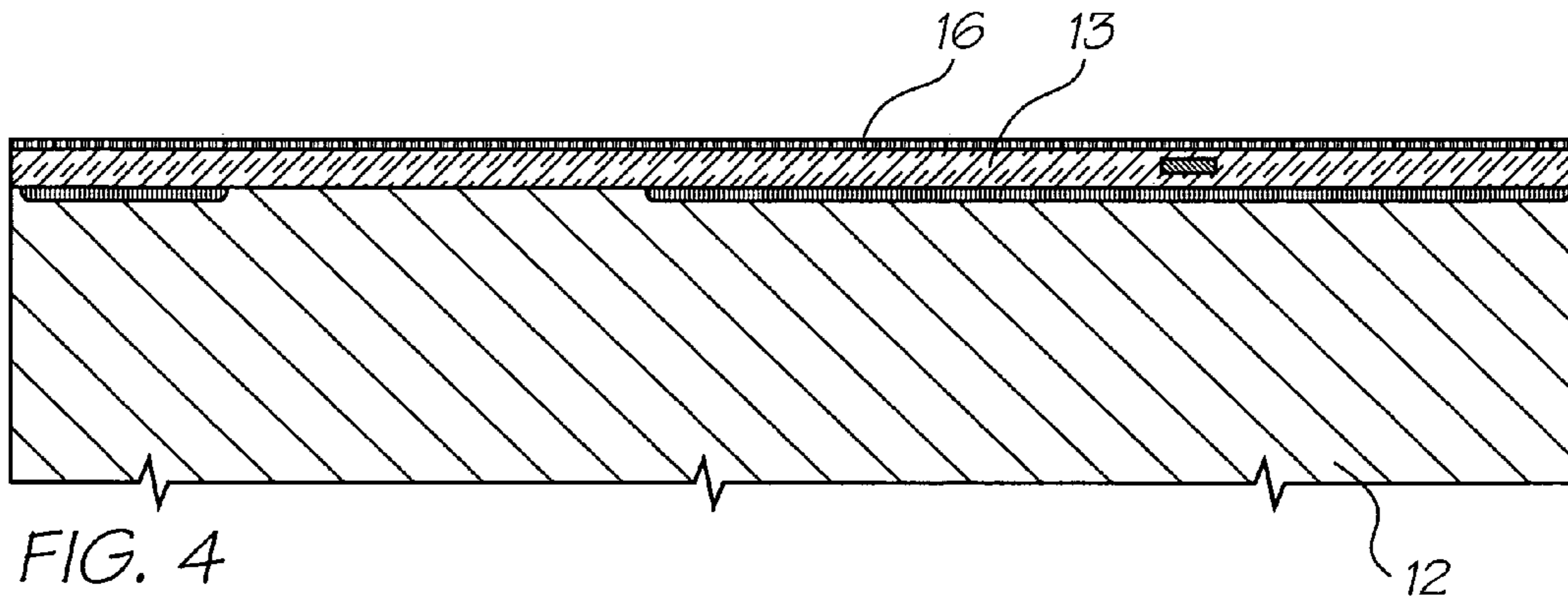


FIG. 4

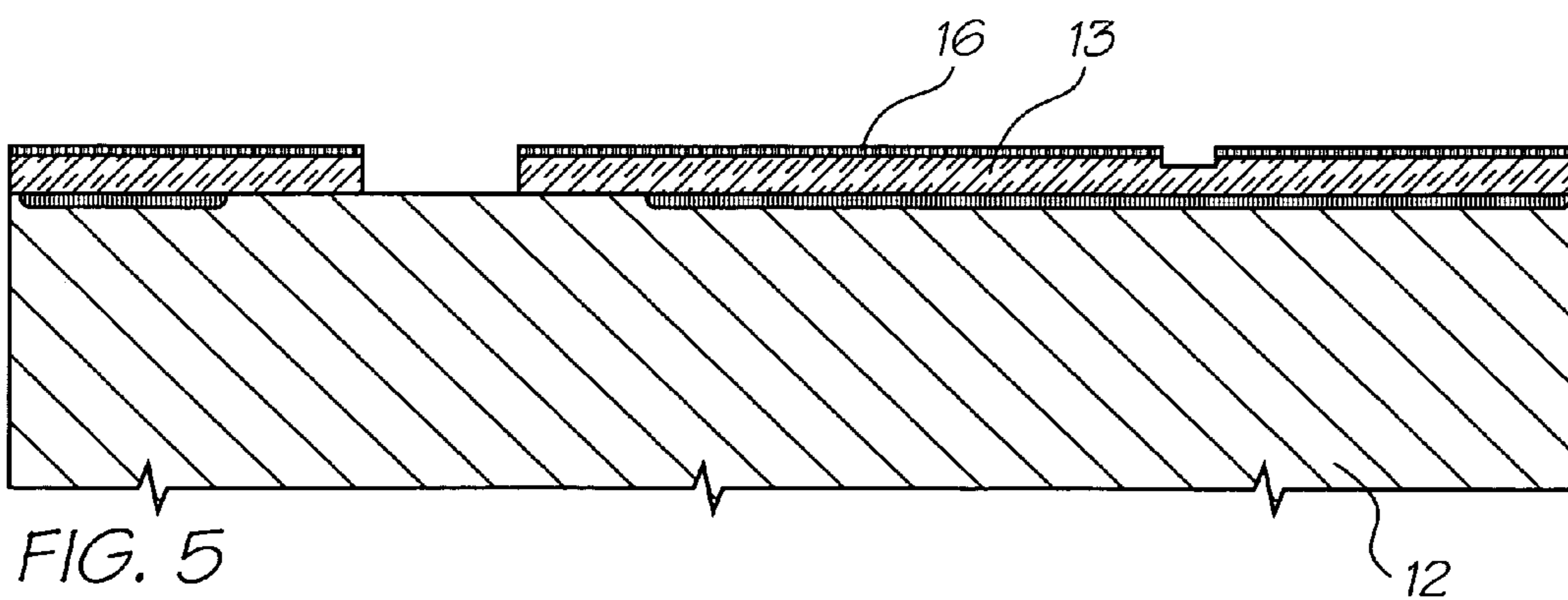
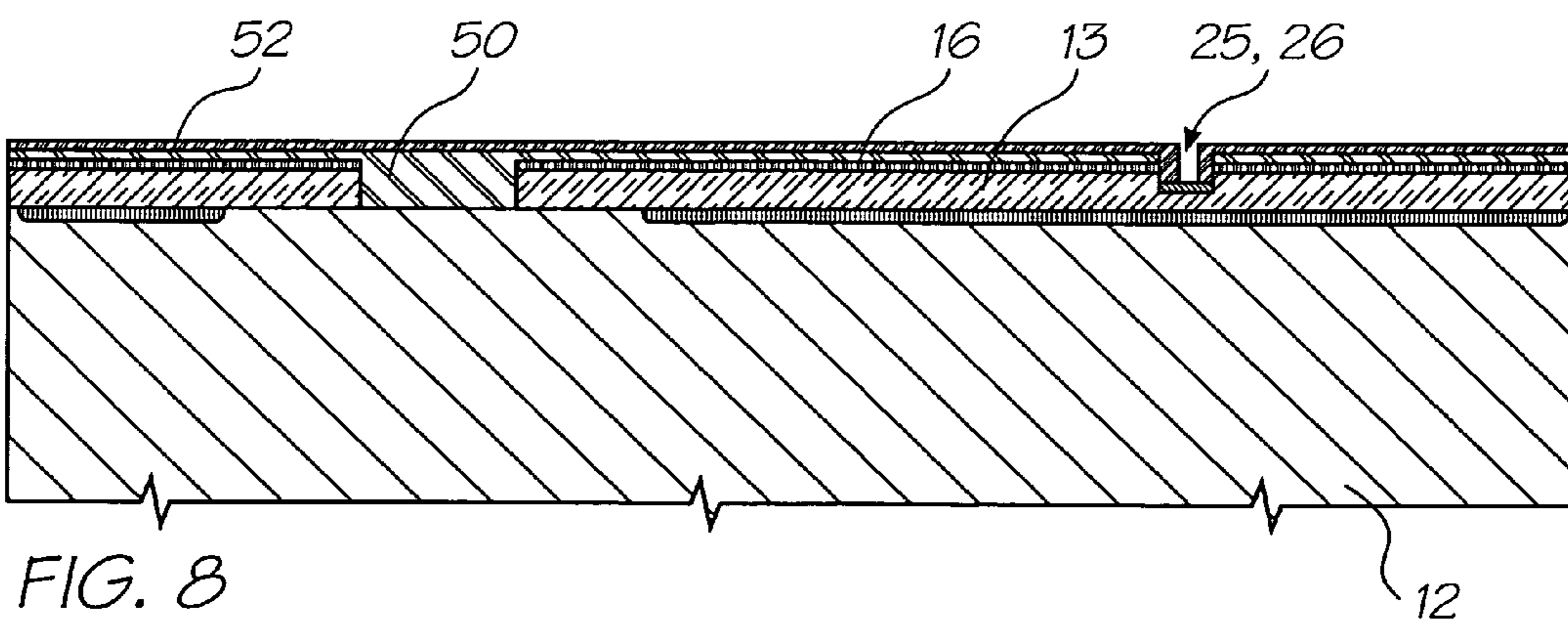
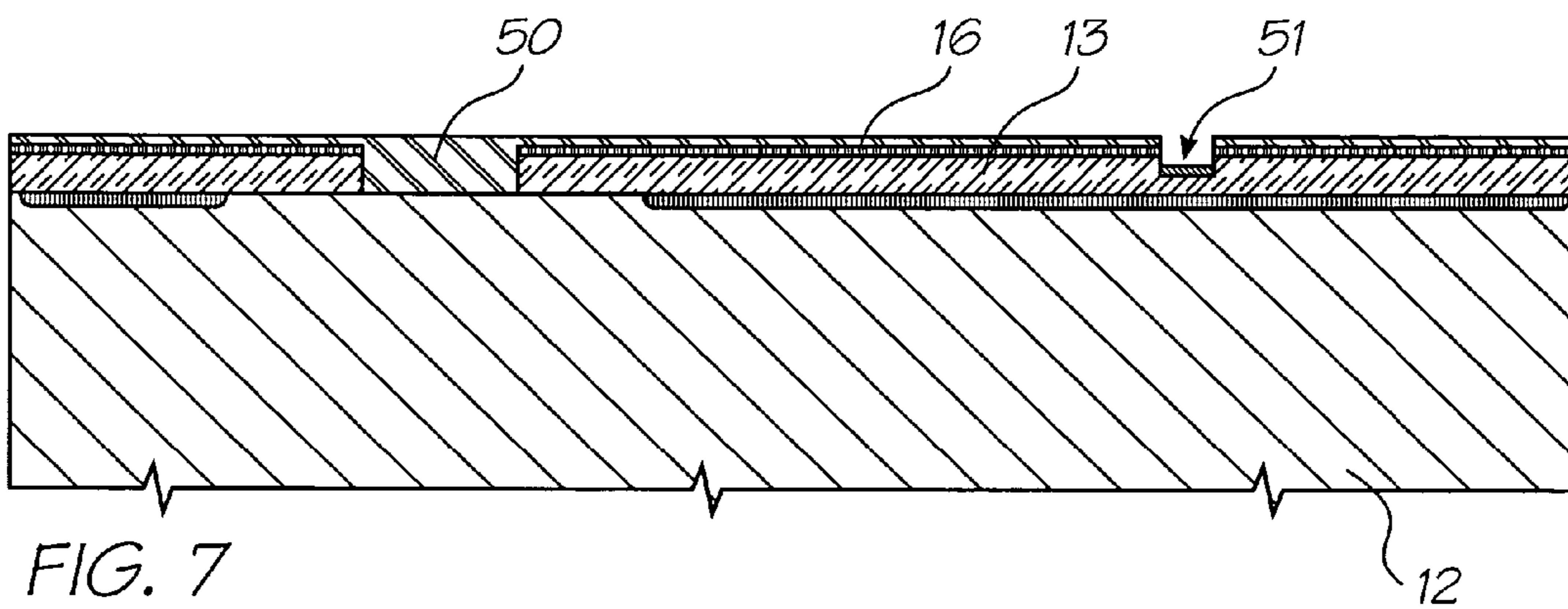
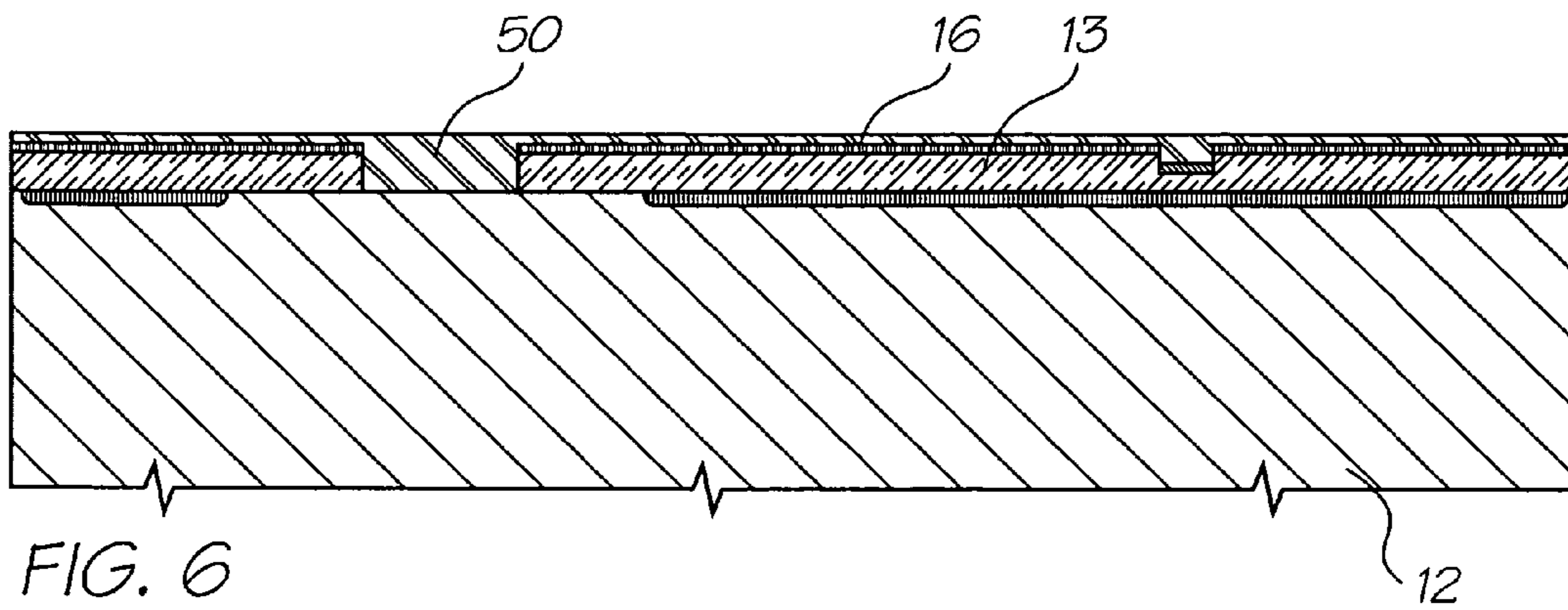
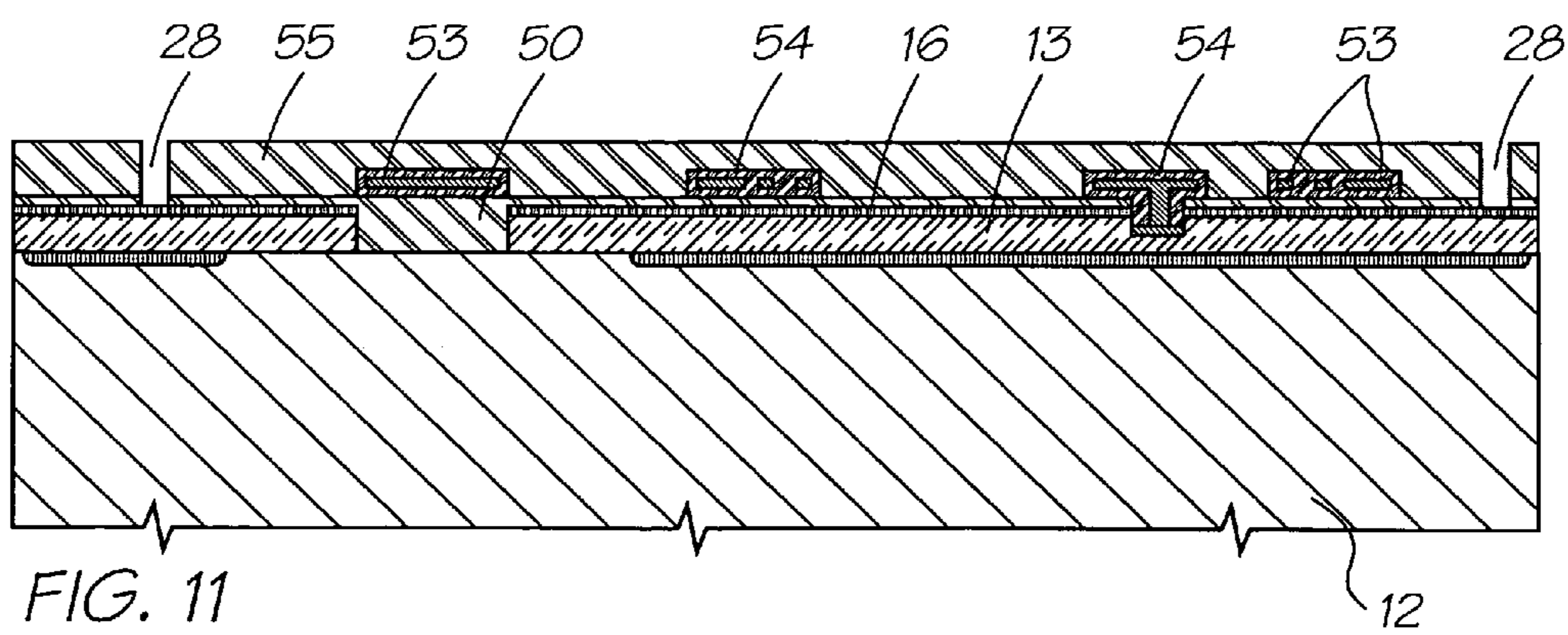
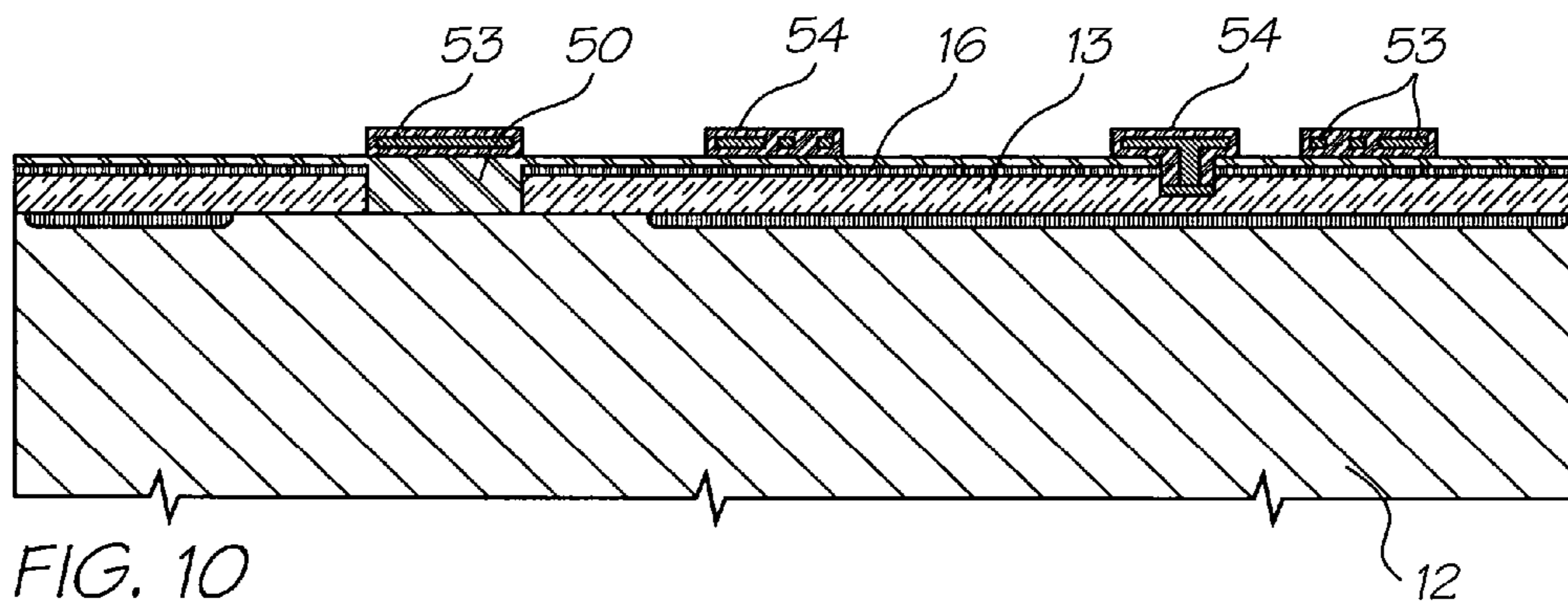
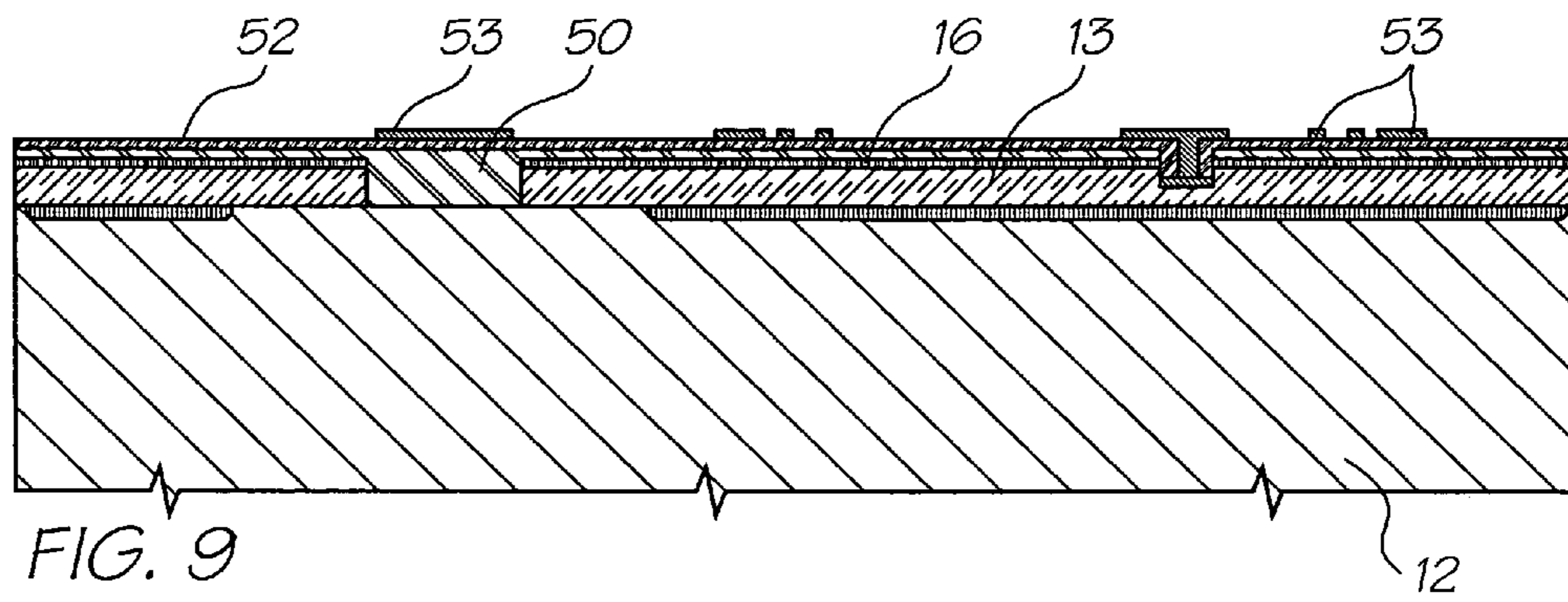
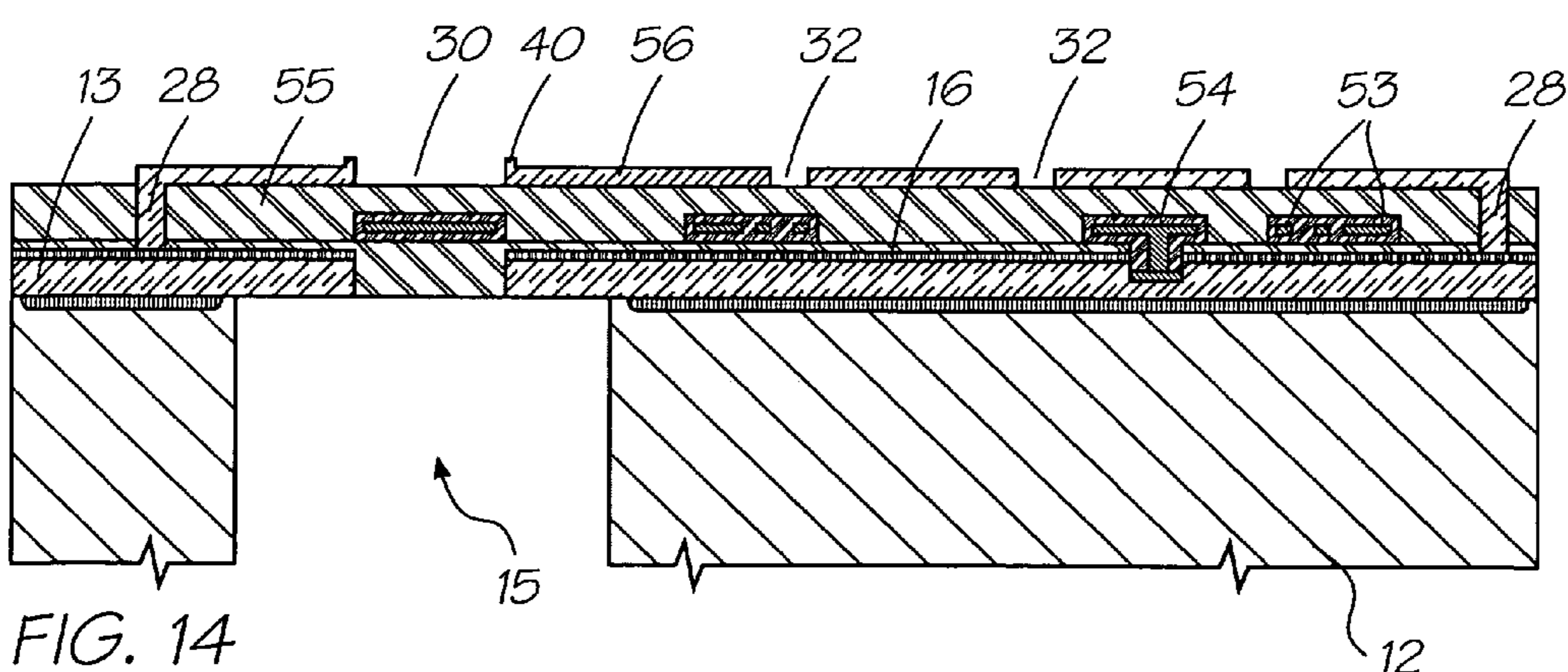
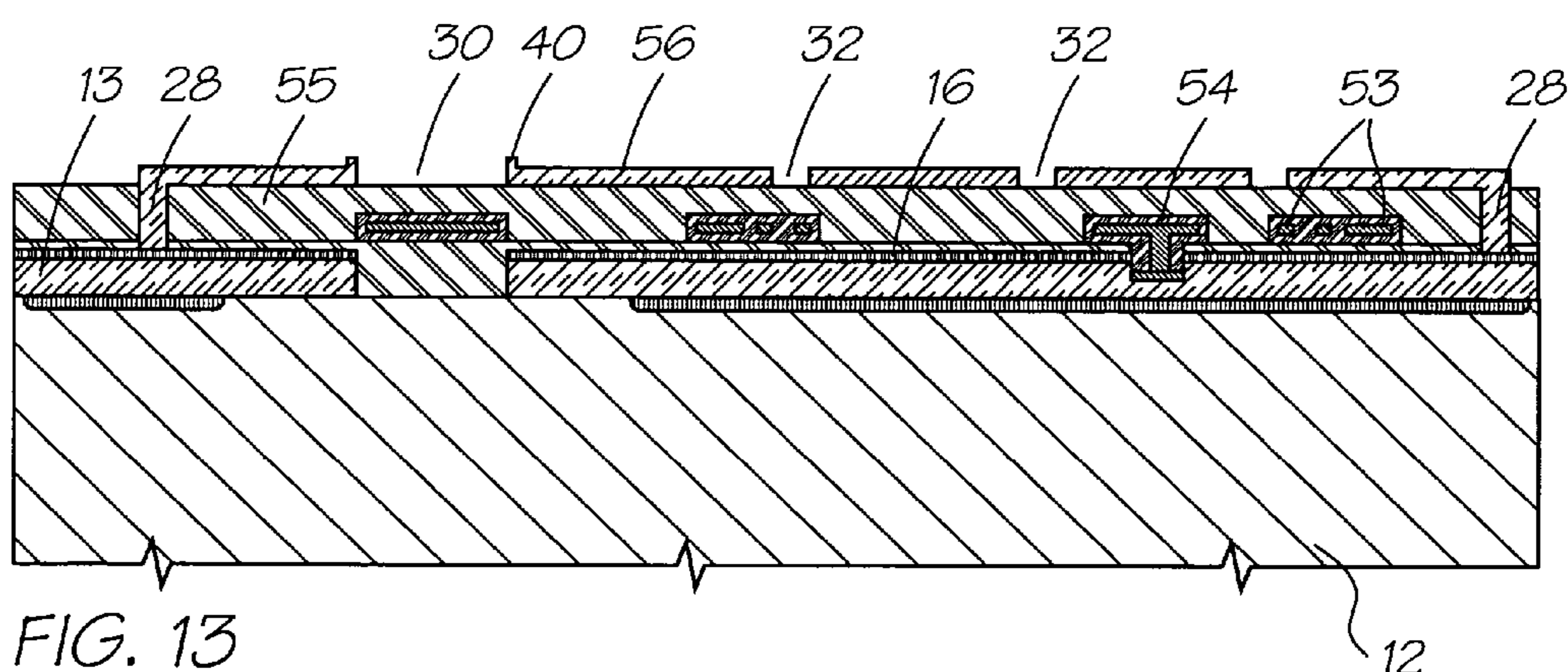
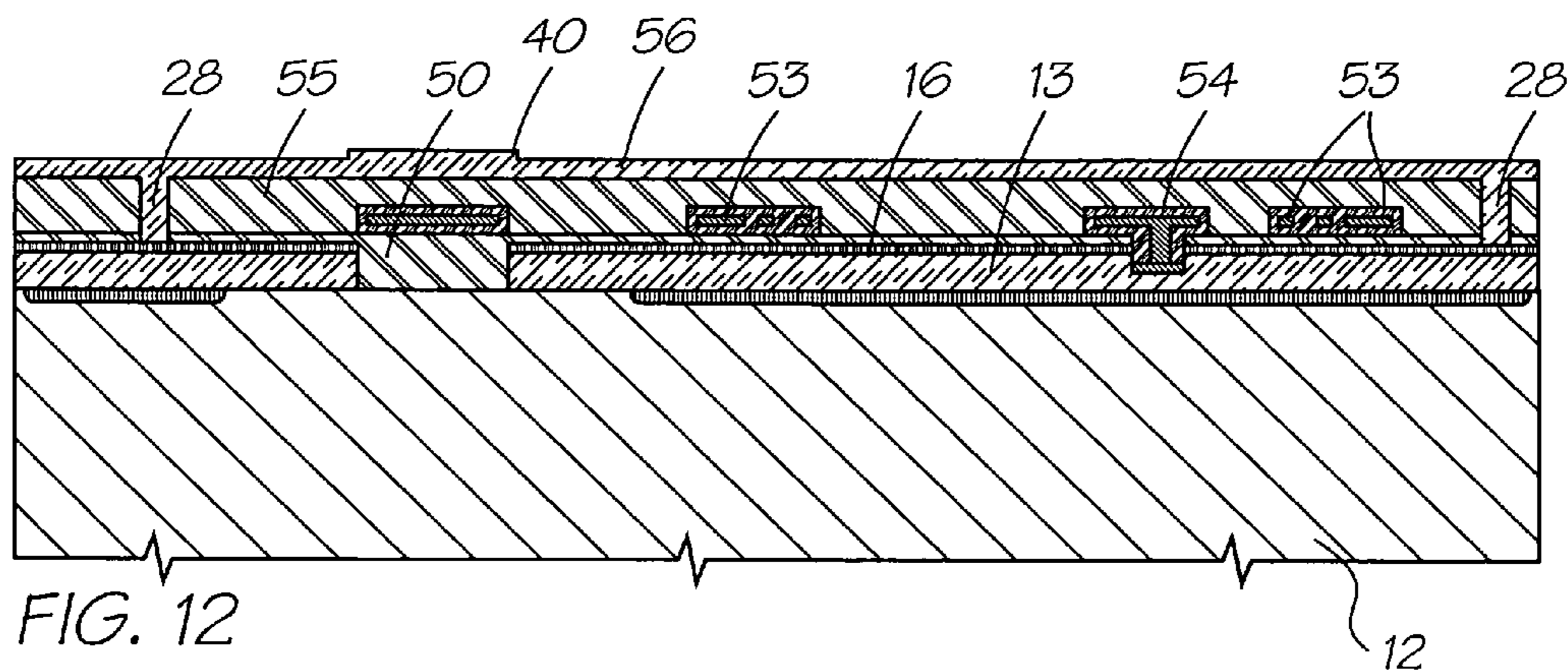


FIG. 5







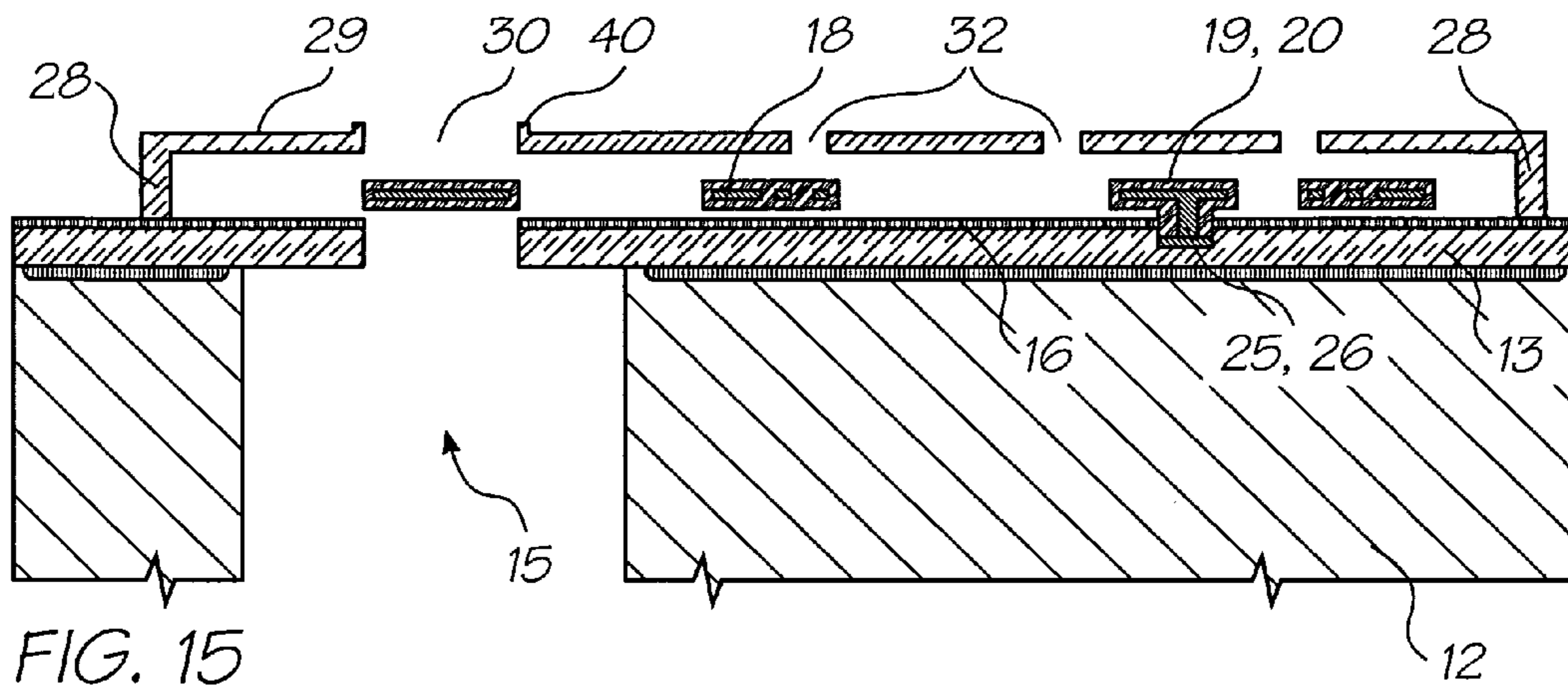


FIG. 15

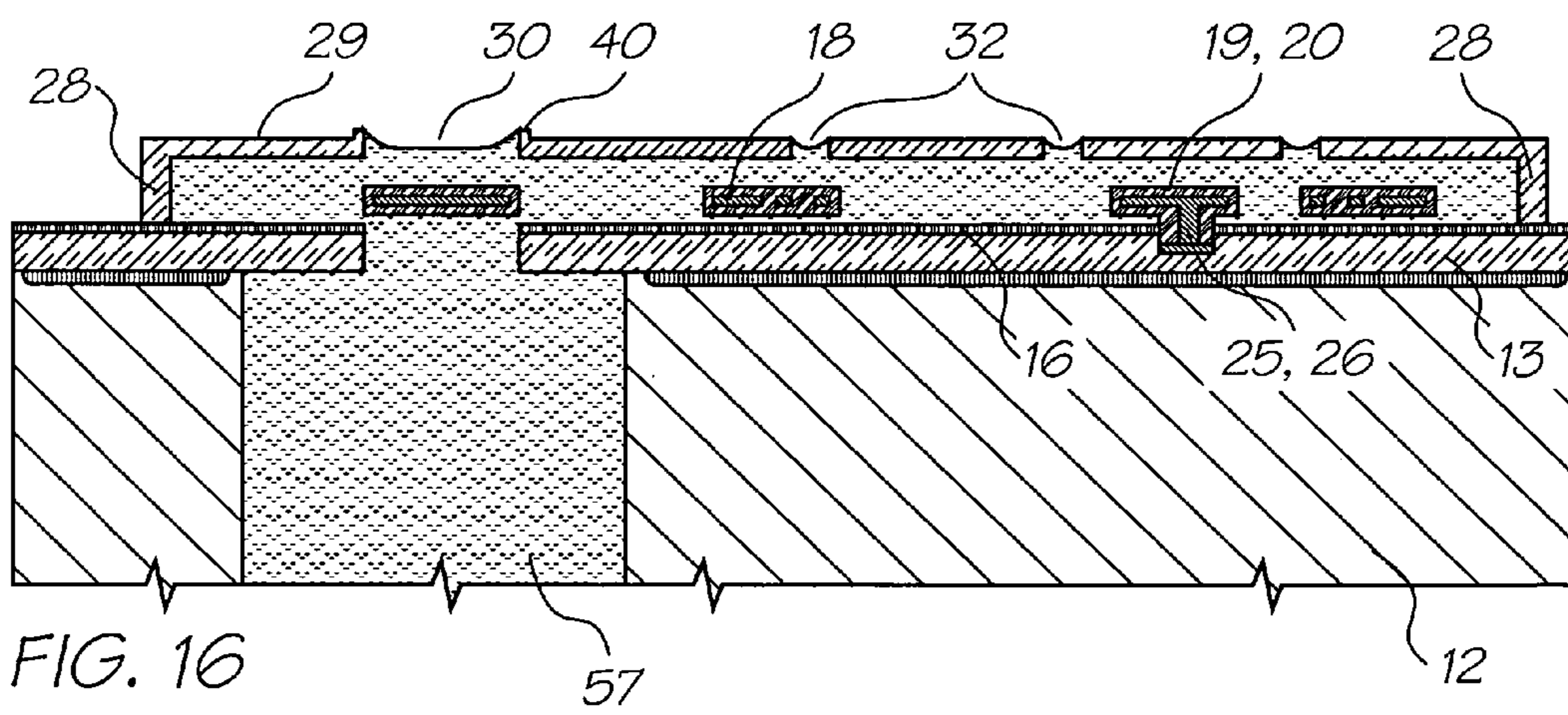


FIG. 16

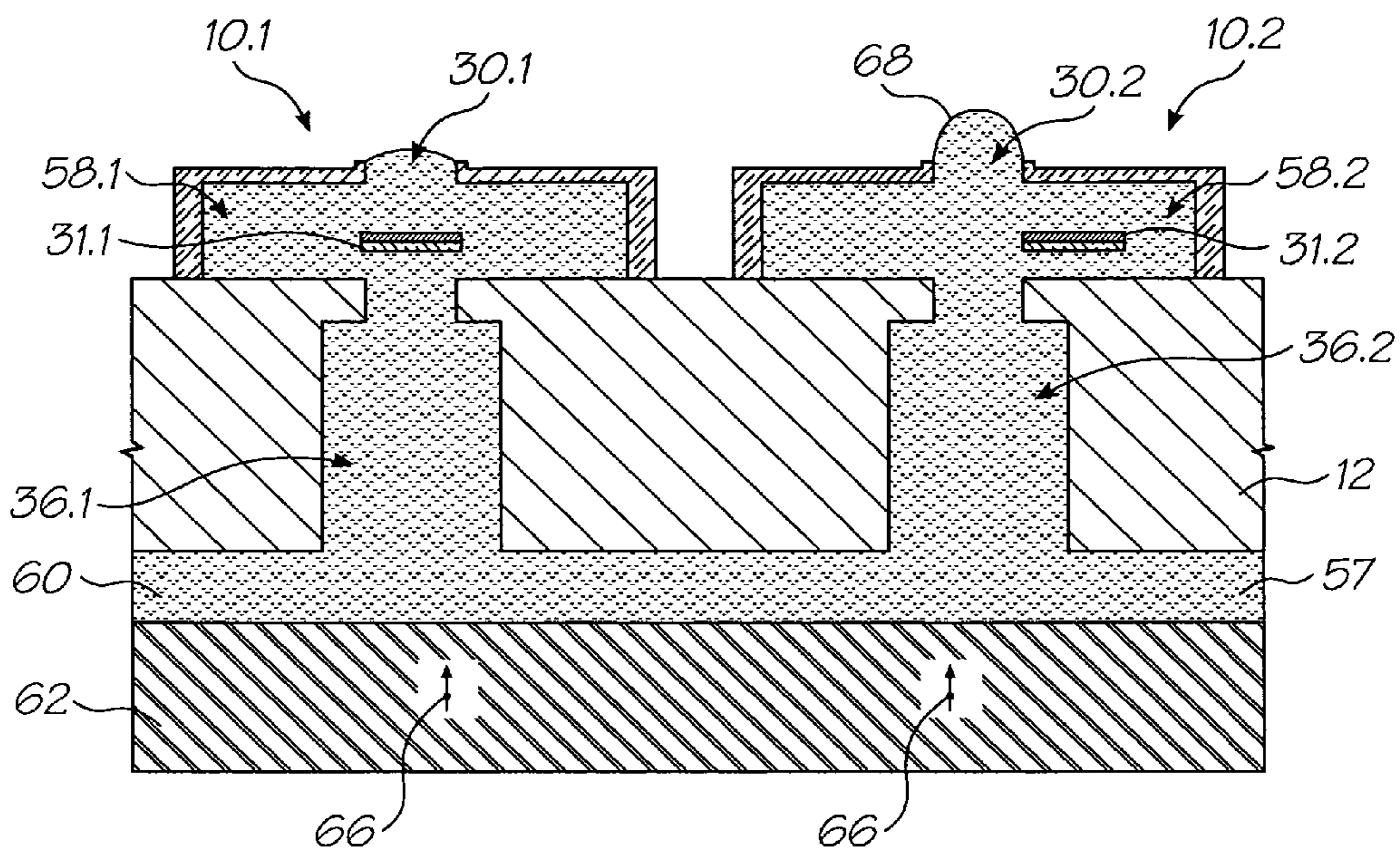


FIG. 17

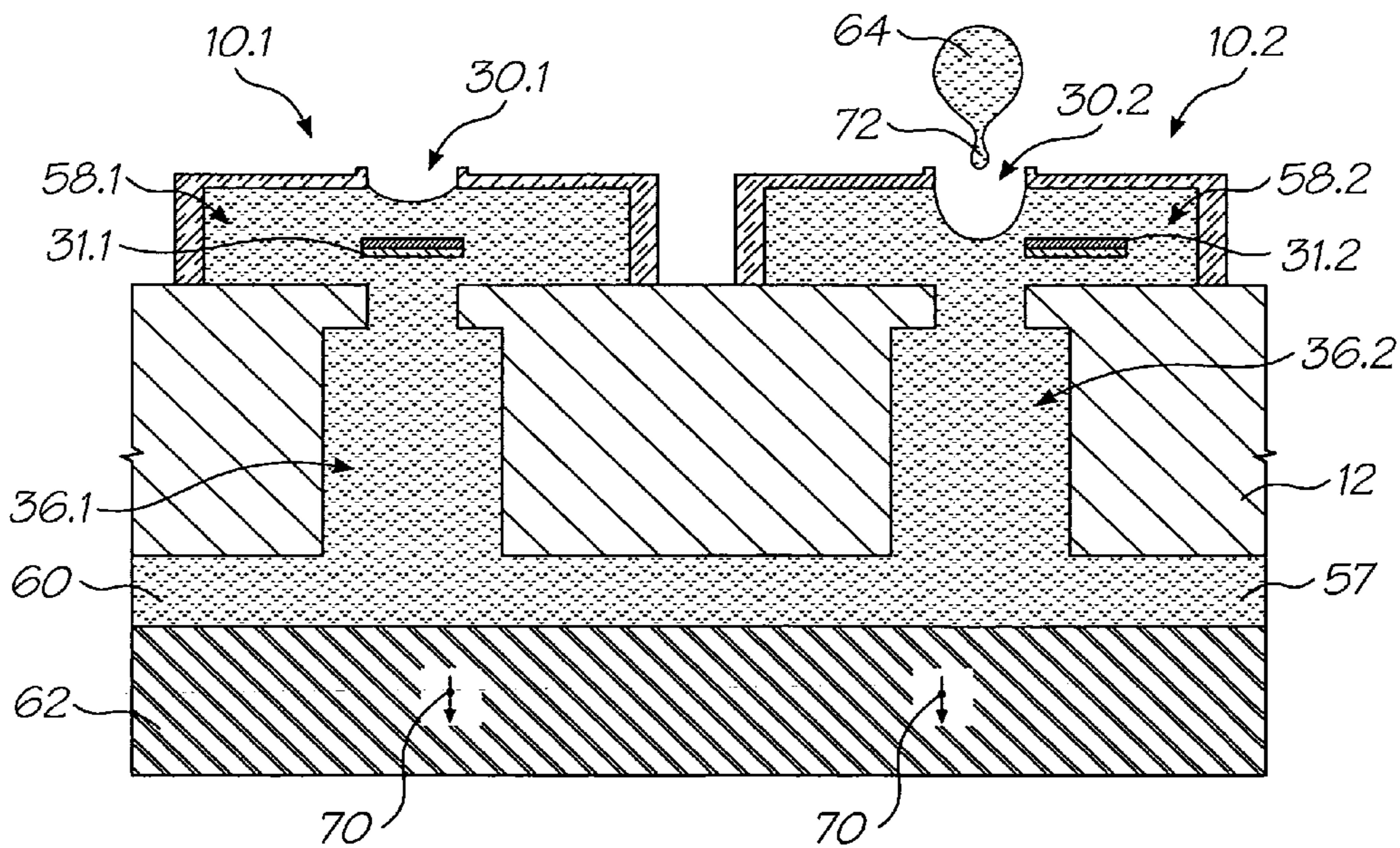


FIG. 18

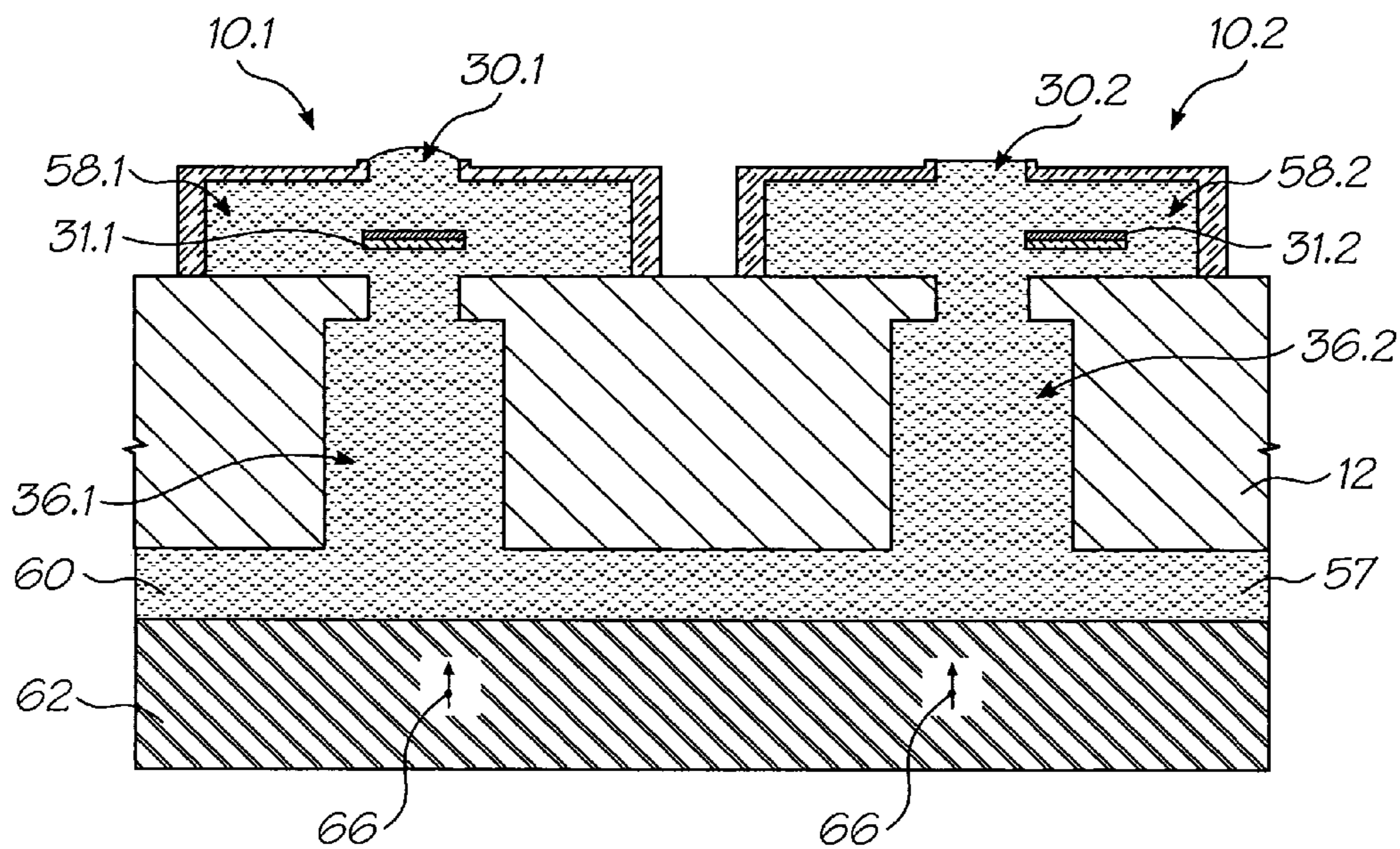


FIG. 19

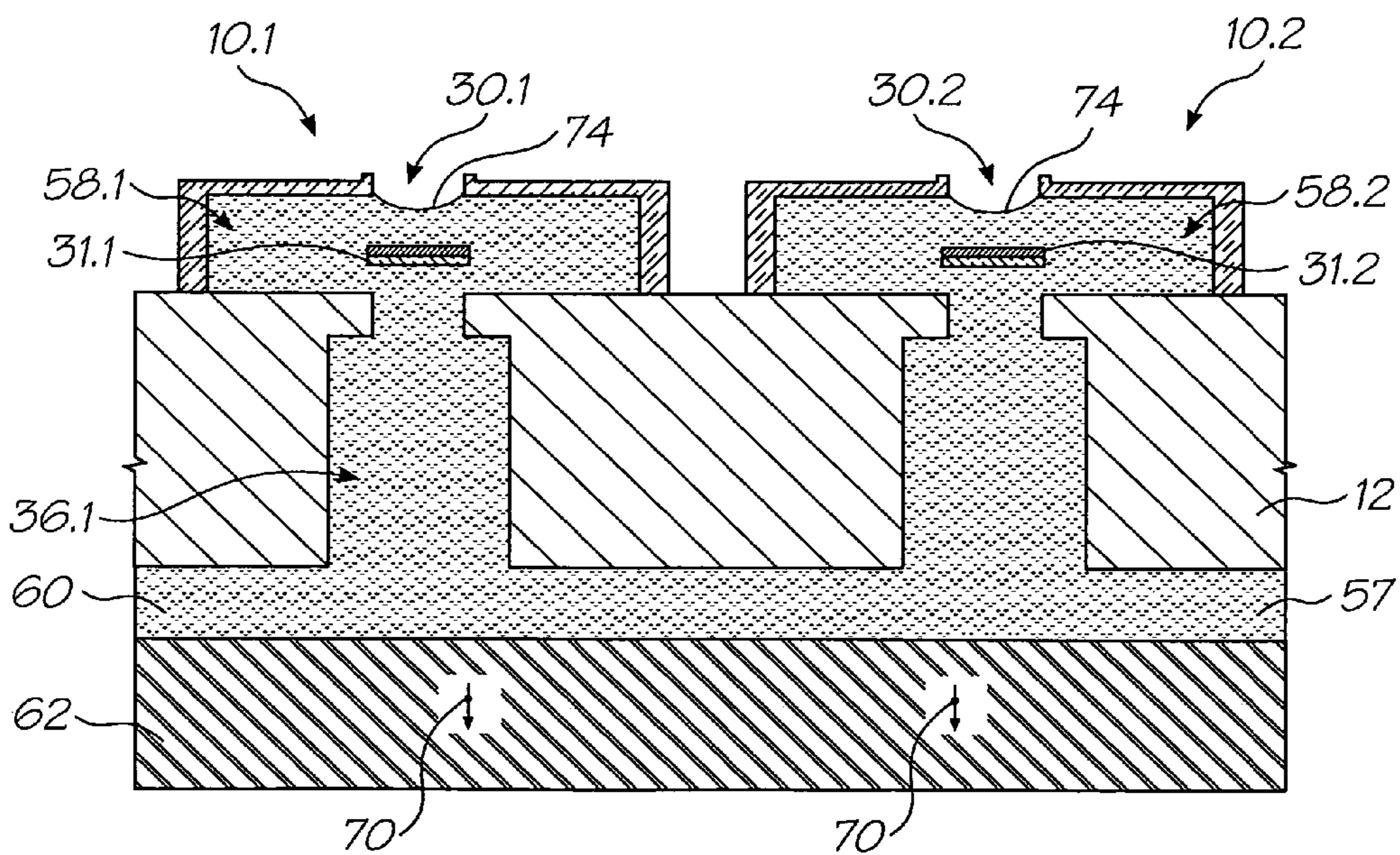


FIG. 20

NOZZLE ASSEMBLY INCORPORATING A SHUTTERED ACTUATION MECHANISM

CROSS-REFERENCES TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This is a Continuation Application of U.S. application Ser. No. 11/442,176 filed on May 30, 2006, now issued U.S. Pat. No. 7,152,960, which is a Continuation Application of U.S. application Ser. No. 10/884,887 filed Jul. 6, 2004, now issued U.S. Pat. No. 7,140,719, which is a Continuation Application of U.S. application Ser. No. 10/693,947, filed on Oct. 28, 2003, now issued U.S. Pat. No. 6,783,217, which is a Continuation Application of U.S. application Ser. No. 10/302,606, filed on Nov. 23, 2002, now issued U.S. Pat. No. 6,644,767, which is a Continuation Application of U.S. application Ser. No. 09/855,094, filed on May 14, 2001, now issued U.S. Pat. No. 6,485,123, which is a Continuation-in-Part of U.S. application Ser. No. 09/112,815 filed on Jul. 10, 1998, now issued U.S. Pat. No. 6,247,792, all of which are herein incorporated by reference.

CROSS REFERENCES TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

The following Australian provisional patent applications are hereby incorporated by reference. For the purposes of location and identification, U.S. patents/patent applications identified by their U.S. patent/patent application Ser. Nos. are listed alongside the Australian applications from which the U.S. patents/patent applications claim the right of priority.

CROSS-REFERENCED AUSTRALIAN PROVISIONAL PATENT APPLICATION NO.	U.S. Pat. No./ PATENT APPLICATION (CLAIMING RIGHT OF PRIORITY FROM AUSTRALIAN PROVISIONAL APPLICATION)
PO7991	6750901
PO8505	6476863
PO7988	6788336
PO9395	6322181
PO8017	6597817
PO8014	6227648
PO8025	6727948
PO8032	6690419
PO7999	6727951
PO8030	6196541
PO7997	6195150
PO7979	6362868
PO7978	6831681
PO7982	6431669
PO7989	6362869
PO8019	6472052
PO7980	6356715
PO8018	6894694
PO7938	6636216
PO8016	6366693
PO8024	6329990
PO7939	6459495
PO8501	6137500
PO8500	6690416
PO7987	7050143
PO8022	6398328
PO8497	7110024
PO8020	6431704
PO8504	6879341
PO8000	6415054
PO7934	6665454
PO7990	6542645

-continued

CROSS-REFERENCED AUSTRALIAN PROVISIONAL PATENT APPLICATION NO.	U.S. Pat. No./ PATENT APPLICATION (CLAIMING RIGHT OF PRIORITY FROM AUSTRALIAN PROVISIONAL APPLICATION)
PO8499	6486886
PO8502	6381361
PO7981	6317192
PO7986	6850274
PO7983	09/113054
PO8026	6646757
PO8028	6624848
PO9394	6357135
PO9397	6271931
PO9398	6353772
PO9399	6106147
PO9400	6665008
PO9401	6304291
PO9403	6305770
PO9405	6289262
PP0959	6315200
PP1397	6217165
PP2370	6786420
PO8003	6350023
PO8005	6318849
PO8066	6227652
PO8072	6213588
PO8040	6213589
PO8071	6231163
PO8047	6247795
PO8035	6394581
PO8044	6244691
PO8063	6257704
PO8057	6416168
PO8056	6220694
PO8069	6257705
PO8049	6247794
PO8036	6234610
PO8048	6247793
PO8070	6264306
PO8067	6241342
PO8001	6247792
PO8038	6264307
PO8033	6254220
PO8002	6234611
PO8068	6302528
PO8062	6283582
PO8034	6239821
PO8039	6338547
PO8041	6247796
PO8004	6557977
PO8037	6390603
PO8043	6362843
PO8042	6293653
PO8064	6312107
PO9389	6227653
PO9391	6234609
PP0888	6238040
PP0891	6188415
PP0890	6227654
PP0873	6209989
PP0993	6247791
PP0890	6336710
PP1398	6217153
PP2592	6416167
PP2593	6243113
PP3991	6283581
PP3987	6247790
PP3985	6260953
PP3983	6267469
PO7935	6224780
PO7936	6235212
PO7937	6280643
PO8061	6284147
PO8054	6214244
PO8065	6071750
PO8055	6267905

-continued

CROSS-REFERENCED AUSTRALIAN PROVISIONAL PATENT APPLICATION NO.	U.S. Pat. No./ PATENT APPLICATION (CLAIMING RIGHT OF PRIORITY FROM AUSTRALIAN PROVISIONAL APPLICATION)
PO8053	6251298
PO8078	6258285
PO7933	6225138
PO7950	6241904
PO7949	6299786
PO8060	6866789
PO8059	6231773
PO8073	6190931
PO8076	6248249
PO8075	6290862
PO8079	6241906
PO8050	6565762
PO8052	6241905
PO7948	6451216
PO7951	6231772
PO8074	6274056
PO7941	6290861
PO8077	6248248
PO8058	6306671
PO8051	6331258
PO8045	6110754
PO7952	6294101
PO8046	6416679
PO9390	6264849
PO9392	6254793
PP0889	6235211
PP0887	6491833
PP0882	6264850
PP0874	6258284
PP1396	6312615
PP3989	6228668
PP2591	6180427
PP3990	6171875
PP3986	6267904
PP3984	6245247
PP3982	6315914
PP0895	6231148
PP0869	6293658
PP0887	6614560
PP0885	6238033
PP0884	6312070
PP0886	6238111
PP0877	6378970
PP0878	6196739
PP0883	6270182
PP0880	6152619
PO8006	6087638
PO8007	6340222
PO8010	6041600
PO8011	6299300
PO7947	6067797
PO7944	6286935
PO7946	6044646
PP0894	6382769

STATEMENT REGARDING FEDERALLY
SPONSORED RESEARCH OR DEVELOPMENT

Not applicable.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to a micro-electromechanical valve assembly.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Many different types of printing have been invented, a large number of which are presently in use. The known

forms of print have a variety of methods for marking the print media with a relevant marking media. Commonly used forms of printing include offset printing, laser printing and copying devices, dot matrix type impact printers, thermal paper printers, film recorders, thermal wax printers, dye sublimation printers and ink jet printers both of the drop on demand and continuous flow type. Each type of printer has its own advantages and problems when considering cost, speed, quality, reliability, simplicity of construction and operation etc.

In recent years, the field of ink jet printing, wherein each individual pixel of ink is derived from one or more ink nozzles has become increasingly popular primarily due to its inexpensive and versatile nature.

Many different techniques on ink jet printing have been invented. For a survey of the field, reference is made to an article by J Moore, "Non-Impact Printing: Introduction and Historical Perspective", Output Hard Copy Devices, Editors R Dubeck and S Sherr, pages 207-220 (1988).

Ink Jet printers themselves come in many different types. The utilisation of a continuous stream ink in ink jet printing appears to date back to at least 1929 wherein U.S. Pat. No. 1,941,001 by Hansell discloses a simple form of continuous stream electro-static ink jet printing.

U.S. Pat. No. 3,596,275 by Sweet also discloses a process of a continuous ink jet printing including the step wherein the ink jet stream is modulated by a high frequency electro-static field so as to cause drop separation. This technique is still used by several manufacturers including Elmjet and Scitex (see also U.S. Pat. No. 3,373,437 by Sweet et al)

Piezoelectric ink jet printers are also one form of commonly used ink jet printing device. Piezoelectric systems are disclosed by Kyser et. al. in U.S. Pat. No. 3,946,398 (1970) which discloses a diaphragm mode of operation, by Zolten in U.S. Pat. No. 3,683,212 (1970) which discloses a squeeze mode of operation of a piezoelectric crystal, Stemme in U.S. Pat. No. 3,747,120 (1972) which discloses a bend mode of piezoelectric operation, Howkins in U.S. Pat. No. 4,459,601 which discloses a piezoelectric push mode actuation of the ink jet stream and Fischbeck in U.S. Pat. No. 4,584,590 which discloses a shear mode type of piezoelectric transducer element.

Recently, thermal ink jet printing has become an extremely popular form of ink jet printing. The ink jet printing techniques include those disclosed by Endo et al in GB 2,007,162 (1979) and Vaught et al in U.S. Pat. No. 4,490,728. Both the aforementioned references disclose ink jet printing techniques rely upon the activation of an electrothermal actuator which results in the creation of a bubble in a constricted space, such as a nozzle, which thereby causes the ejection of ink from an aperture connected to the confined space onto a relevant print media. Printing devices using the electro-thermal actuator are manufactured by manufacturers such as Canon and Hewlett Packard.

As can be seen from the foregoing, many different types of printing technologies are available. Ideally, a printing technology should have a number of desirable attributes. These include inexpensive construction and operation, high speed operation, safe and continuous long term operation etc. Each technology may have its own advantages and disadvantages in the areas of cost, speed, quality, reliability, power usage, simplicity of construction operation, durability and consumables.

The valve assembly that forms the basis of this invention facilitates the achievement of a number of the desirable attributes listed above.

5

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

According to a first aspect of the invention, there is provided an elongate actuator for moving a closure member in a micro-electromechanical valve assembly for controlling a flow of fluid through a fluid supply channel, the channel being defined by a wafer substrate and drive circuitry layers positioned on the wafer substrate and terminating at a fluid supply opening, the actuator having a first end anchored to the wafer substrate so as to be in electrical contact with at least one of the drive circuitry layers and a second end connected to the closure member so as to move it between a closed position, in which the closure member covers the fluid supply opening and ink is inhibited from flowing through the fluid supply channel, and an open position, in which the fluid supply opening is opened to allow the ink to flow through the fluid supply channel, wherein at least a portion of the actuator, in a rest condition, has an arcuate shape and is configured to be heated, upon receiving an electrical current from the drive circuitry, such that when the portion is heated it expands and causes the actuator to straighten sufficiently to displace the closure member from closed to an open position; and a subsequent cooling of the portion, after the current is discontinued, causes the actuator to return to its rest condition returning the closure to the closed position.

According to another aspect of the invention, there is provided a micro-electromechanical valve assembly for controlling a flow of fluid through a fluid supply channel defined in a wafer substrate and drive circuitry layers positioned on the wafer substrate and terminating at a fluid supply opening, the valve assembly comprising;

an elongate actuator that is anchored at one end to the wafer substrate to be in electrical contact with the drive circuitry layers; and

a closure member that is mounted on an opposite end of the elongate actuator, the actuator being configured to receive an electrical signal from the drive circuitry layer to displace the closure member between a closed position in which the closure member covers the fluid supply opening and ink is inhibited from flowing through the fluid supply channel and an open position, wherein

the elongate actuator is shaped so that, in a rest condition, the actuator encloses an arc, the actuator including a heating portion that is capable of being heated on receipt of the electrical signal to expand, the heating portion being configured so that, when the portion is heated, the resultant expansion of the portion causes the actuator to straighten at least partially and a subsequent cooling of the portion causes the actuator to return to its rest condition thereby displacing the closure between the closed and open positions.

Each actuator may include a body portion that is of a resiliently flexible material having a coefficient of thermal expansion which is such that the material can expand to perform work when heated, the heating portion being positioned in the body portion and defining a heating circuit of a suitable metal.

The heating circuit may include a heater and a return trace, the heater being positioned proximate an inside edge of the body portion and the return trace being positioned outwardly of the heater, so that an inside region of the body portion is heated to a relatively greater extent with the result that the inside region expands to a greater extent than a remainder of the body portion.

A serpentine length of said suitable material may define the heater.

6

The body portion may be of polytetrafluoroethylene and the heating circuit may be of copper

Each actuator may define a coil that partially uncoils when the heating portion expands.

In accordance with a third aspect of the present invention, there is provided an ink jet nozzle comprising an ink ejection port for the ejection of ink, an ink supply with an oscillating ink pressure interconnected to the ink ejection port, a shutter mechanism interconnected between the ink supply and the ink ejection port, which blocks the ink ejection port, and an actuator mechanism for moving the shutter mechanism on demand away from the ink ejection port so as to allow for the ejection of ink on demand from the ink ejection port.

In another embodiment of the invention, there is provided a method of operating an ink jet printhead that includes a plurality of nozzle arrangements and an ink reservoir, each nozzle arrangement having:

a nozzle chamber and an ink ejection port in fluid communication with the nozzle chamber, and

a closure that is operatively positioned with respect to the ink ejection port, the closure being displaceable between open and closed positions to open and close the ink ejection port, respectively,

the ink reservoir in fluid communication with the nozzle chambers, the method comprising the steps of:

maintaining each closure in the closed position;

subjecting ink in the ink reservoir and thus each nozzle chamber to an oscillating pressure,

selectively and independently displacing each closure into the open position so that an ink droplet is ejected from the respective ink ejection port as a result of the oscillating pressure.

Further, the actuator preferably comprises a thermal actuator which is activated by the heating of one side of the actuator. Preferably the actuator has a coiled form and is uncoiled upon heating. The actuator includes a serpentine heater element encased in a material having a high coefficient of thermal expansion. The serpentine heater concertinas upon heating. Advantageously, the actuator includes a thick return trace for the serpentine heater element. The material in which the serpentine heater element is encased comprises polytetrafluoroethylene. The actuator is formed within a nozzle chamber which is formed on a silicon wafer and ink is supplied to the ejection port through channels etched through the silicon wafer.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Notwithstanding any other forms which may fall within the scope of the present invention, preferred forms of the invention will now be described, by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings in which:

FIG. 1 is an exploded perspective view illustrating the construction of a single ink jet nozzle in accordance with the preferred embodiment;

FIG. 2 is a perspective view, partly in section, of a single ink jet nozzle constructed in accordance with the preferred embodiment;

FIG. 3 provides a legend of the materials indicated in FIGS. 4 to 16;

FIG. 4 to FIG. 16 illustrate sectional views of the manufacturing steps in one form of construction of an ink jet printhead nozzle; and

FIG. 17 shows a schematic, sectional end view of part of an ink jet nozzle array showing two nozzle arrangements of the array;

FIG. 18 shows the array with ink being ejected from one of the nozzle arrangements;

FIG. 19 shows a schematic side view of refilling of the nozzle of the first nozzle arrangement; and

FIG. 20 shows operation of the array preceding commencement of ink ejection from the second of the illustrated nozzle arrangements.

DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED AND OTHER EMBODIMENTS

In the preferred embodiment, an oscillating-ink reservoir pressure is used to eject ink from ejection nozzles. Each nozzle has an associated shutter which normally blocks the nozzle. The shutter is moved away from the nozzle by an actuator whenever an ink drop is to be fired.

Turning initially to FIG. 1, there is illustrated in exploded perspective a single ink jet nozzle 10 as constructed in accordance with the principles of the present invention. The exploded perspective illustrates a single ink jet nozzle 10. Ideally, the nozzles are formed as an array on a silicon wafer 12. The silicon wafer 12 is processed so as to have two level metal CMOS circuitry which includes metal layers and glass layers 13 and which are planarised after construction. The CMOS metal layer has a reduced aperture 14 for the access of ink from the back of silicon wafer 12 via an ink supply channel 15.

A bottom nitride layer 16 is constructed on top of the CMOS layer 13 so as to cover, protect and passivate the CMOS layer 13 from subsequent etching processes. Subsequently, there is provided a copper heater layer 18 which is sandwiched between two polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE) layers 19,20. The copper layer 18 is connected to lower CMOS layer 13 through vias 25,26. The copper layer 18 and PTFE layers 19,20 are encapsulated within nitride borders e.g. 28 and nitride top layer 29 which includes an ink ejection port 30 in addition to a number of sacrificial etched access holes 32 which are of a smaller dimension than the ejection port 30 and are provided for allowing access of an etchant to lower sacrificial layers thereby allowing the use of the etchant in the construction of layers, 18,19,20 and 28.

Turning now to FIG. 2, there is shown a cutaway perspective view of a fully constructed ink jet nozzle 10. The ink jet nozzle uses an oscillating ink pressure to eject ink from ejection port 30. Each nozzle has an associated shutter 31 which normally blocks it. The shutter 31 is moved away from the ejection port 30 by an actuator 35 whenever an ink drop is to be fired.

The ports 30 are in communication with ink chambers which contain the actuators 35. These chambers are connected to ink supply channels 15 which are etched through the silicon wafer. The ink supply channels 15 are substantially wider than the ports 30, to reduce the fluidic resistance to the ink pressure wave. The ink channels 15 are connected to an ink reservoir. An ultrasonic transducer (for example, a piezoelectric transducer) is positioned in the reservoir. The transducer oscillates the ink pressure at approximately 100 KHz. The ink pressure oscillation is sufficient that ink drops would be ejected from the nozzle were it not blocked by the shutter 31.

The shutters are moved by a thermoelastic actuator 35. The actuators are formed as a coiled serpentine copper heater 23 embedded in polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE) 19/20. PTFE has a very high coefficient of thermal expansion (approximately 770×10^{-6}). The current return trace 22 from the heater 23 is also embedded in the PTFE actuator 35, the current return trace 22 is made wider than the heater

trace 23 and is not serpentine. Therefore, it does not heat the PTFE as much as the serpentine heater 23 does. The serpentine heater 23 is positioned along the inside edge of the PTFE coil, and the return trace is positioned on the outside edge. When actuated, the inside edge becomes hotter than the outside edge, and expands more. This results in the actuator 35 uncoiling.

The heater layer 23 is etched in a serpentine manner both to increase its resistance, and to reduce its effective tensile strength along the length of the actuator. This is so that the low thermal expansion of the copper does not prevent the actuator from expanding according to the high thermal expansion characteristics of the PTFE.

By varying the power applied to the actuator 35, the shutter 31 can be positioned between the fully on and fully off positions. This may be used to vary the volume of the ejected drop. Drop volume control may be used either to implement a degree of continuous tone operation, to regulate the drop volume, or both.

When data signals distributed on the printhead indicate that a particular nozzle is turned on, the actuator 35 is energized, which moves the shutter 31 so that it is not blocking the ink chamber. The peak of the ink pressure variation causes the ink to be squirted out of the nozzle 30. As the ink pressure goes negative, ink is drawn back into the nozzle, causing drop break-off. The shutter 31 is kept open until the nozzle is refilled on the next positive pressure cycle. It is then shut to prevent the ink from being withdrawn from the nozzle on the next negative pressure cycle.

Each drop ejection takes two ink pressure cycles. Preferably half of the nozzles 10 should eject drops in one phase, and the other half of the nozzles should eject drops in the other phase. This minimises the pressure variations which occur due to a large number of nozzles being actuated.

Referring to FIGS. 17 to 20, the operation of the printhead is described in greater detail. The printhead comprises an array of nozzle arrangements or nozzles 10, two of which are shown as 10.1 and 10.2 in FIG. 17. Each nozzle arrangement 10 has a chamber 58 in which its associated shutter 31 is arranged.

Each chamber 58 is in communication with an ink reservoir 60 via an ink supply channel 36. An ultrasonic transducer in the form of a piezoelectric transducer 62 is arranged in the ink reservoir 60.

As described above, each ink drop ejection takes two ink pressure cycles. The two ink pressure cycles are referred to as a phase. Half of the nozzles 10 should eject ink drops 64 (FIG. 18) in one phase with the other half of the nozzles ejecting ink drops in the other phase.

Consequently, as shown in FIG. 17 of the drawings, the shutter 31.2 of the nozzle 10.2 is in an open position while the shutter 31.1 of the nozzle 10.1 is in its closed position. It will be appreciated that the nozzle 10.2 represents all the open nozzles of the array of the printhead while the nozzle 10.1 represents all the closed nozzles of the array of the printhead.

In a first pressure cycle, the transducer 62 is displaced in the direction of arrows 66 imparting positive pressure to the ink 57 in the reservoir 60 and, via the channels 36, the chambers 58 of the nozzles 10. Due to the fact that the shutter 31.2 of the nozzle 10.2 is open, ink in the ink ejection port 30.2 bulges outwardly as shown by the meniscus 68. After a predetermined interval, the transducer 62 reverses direction to move in the direction of arrows 70 as shown in FIG. 18 of the drawings. This causes necking, as shown at 72, resulting in separation of the ink drop 64 due to a first negative going pressure cycle imparted to the ink 57.

In the second positive pressure cycle, as shown in FIG. 19 of the drawings, with the transducer moving again in the direction of arrow 66, the positive pressure applied to the ink results in a refilling of the chamber 58.2 of the nozzle 10.2. It is to be noted that the shutter 31.2 is still in an open position with the shutter 31.1 still being in a closed position. In this cycle, no ink is ejected from either nozzle 10.1 or 10.2.

Before the second negative pressure cycle, as shown in FIG. 20 of the drawings, the shutter 31.2 moves to its closed position. Then, as the transducer 62 again moves in the direction of arrows 70 to impart negative pressure to the ink 57, a slight concave meniscus 74 is formed at both ink ejection ports 30.1 and 30.2. However, due to the fact that both shutters 31.1 and 31.2 are closed, withdrawal of ink from the chambers 58.1 and 58.2 of the nozzles 10.1 and 10.2, respectively, is inhibited.

The amplitude of the ultrasonic transducer can be altered in response to the viscosity of the ink (which is typically affected by temperature), and the number of drops which are to be ejected in the current cycle. This amplitude adjustment can be used to maintain consistent drop size in varying environmental conditions.

The drop firing rate can be around 50 KHz. The ink jet head is suitable for fabrication as a monolithic page wide printhead. FIG. 2 shows a single nozzle of a 1600 dpi printhead in "up shooter" configuration.

Returning again to FIG. 1, one method of construction of the ink jet print nozzles 10 will now be described. Starting with the bottom wafer layer 12, the wafer is processed so as to add CMOS layers 13 with an aperture 14 being inserted. The nitride layer 16 is laid down on top of the CMOS layers so as to protect them from subsequent etchings.

A thin sacrificial glass layer is then laid down on top of nitride layers 16 followed by a first PTFE layer 19, the copper layer 18 and a second PTFE layer 20. Then a sacrificial glass layer is formed on top of the PTFE layer and etched to a depth of a few microns to form the nitride border regions 28. Next the top layer 29 is laid down over the sacrificial layer using the mask for forming the various holes including the processing step of forming the rim 40 on nozzle 30. The sacrificial glass is then dissolved away and the channel 15 formed through the wafer by means of utilisation of high density low pressure plasma etching such as that available from Surface Technology Systems.

One form of detailed manufacturing process which can be used to fabricate monolithic ink jet printheads operating in accordance with the principles taught by the present embodiment can proceed using the following steps:

1. Using a double sided polished wafer 12, complete drive transistors, data distribution, and timing circuits using a 0.5 micron, one poly, 2 metal CMOS process 13. The wafer is passivated with 0.1 microns of silicon nitride 16. This step is shown in FIG. 4. For clarity, these diagrams may not be to scale, and may not represent a cross section though any single plane of the nozzle. FIG. 3 is a key to representations of various materials in these manufacturing diagrams, and those of other cross referenced inkjet configurations.

2. Etch nitride and oxide down to silicon using Mask 1. This mask defines the nozzle inlet below the shutter. This step is shown in FIG. 5.

3. Deposit 3 microns of sacrificial material 50 (e.g. aluminum or photosensitive polyimide)

4. Planarize the sacrificial layer to a thickness of 1 micron over nitride. This step is shown in FIG. 6.

5. Etch the sacrificial layer using Mask 2. This mask defines the actuator anchor point 51. This step is shown in FIG. 7.

6. Deposit 1 micron of PTFE 52.

7. Etch the PTFE, nitride, and oxide down to second level metal using Mask 3. This mask defines the heater vias 25, 26. This step is shown in FIG. 8.

8. Deposit the heater 53, which is a 1 micron layer of a conductor with a low Young's modulus; for example aluminum or gold.

9. Pattern the conductor using Mask 4. This step is shown in FIG. 9.

10. Deposit 1 micron of PTFE 54.

11. Etch the PTFE down to the sacrificial layer using Mask 5. This mask defines the actuator and shutter. This step is shown in FIG. 10.

12. Wafer probe. All electrical connections are complete at this point, bond pads are accessible, and the chips are not yet separated.

13. Deposit 3 microns of sacrificial material 55. Planarize using CMP

14. Etch the sacrificial material using Mask 6. This mask defines the nozzle chamber wall 28. This step is shown in FIG. 11.

15. Deposit 3 microns of PECVD glass 56.

16. Etch to a depth of (approx.) 1 micron using Mask 7. This mask defines the nozzle rim 40. This step is shown in FIG. 12.

17. Etch down to the sacrificial layer using Mask 6. This mask defines the roof of the nozzle chamber, the nozzle 30, and the sacrificial etch access holes 32. This step is shown in FIG. 13.

18. Back-etch completely through the silicon wafer (with, for example, an ASE Advanced Silicon Etcher from Surface Technology Systems) using Mask 7. This mask defines the ink inlets 15 which are etched through the wafer. The wafer is also diced by this etch. This step is shown in FIG. 14.

19. Etch the sacrificial material. The nozzle chambers are cleared, the actuators freed, and the chips are separated by this etch. This step is shown in FIG. 15.

20. Mount the printheads in their packaging, which may be a molded plastic former incorporating ink channels which supply the appropriate color ink to the ink inlets at the back of the wafer. The package also includes a piezoelectric actuator attached to the rear of the ink channels. The piezoelectric actuator provides the oscillating ink pressure required for the ink jet operation.

21. Connect the printheads to their interconnect systems. For a low profile connection with minimum disruption of airflow, TAB may be used. Wire bonding may also be used if the printer is to be operated with sufficient clearance to the paper.

22. Hydrophobize the front surface of the printheads.

23. Fill the completed printheads with ink 57 and test them. A filled nozzle is shown in FIG. 16.

It would be appreciated by a person skilled in the art that numerous variations and/or modifications may be made to the present invention as shown in the preferred embodiment without departing from the spirit or scope of the invention as broadly described. The present embodiment is, therefore, to be considered in all respects to be illustrative and not restrictive.

The presently disclosed ink jet printing technology is potentially suited to a wide range of printing systems including: colour and monochrome office printers, short run digital printers, high speed digital printers, offset press supplemental printers, low cost scanning printers, high

11

speed pagewidth printers, notebook computers with inbuilt pagewidth printers, portable colour and monochrome printers, colour and monochrome copiers, colour and monochrome facsimile machines, combined printer, facsimile and copying machines, label printers, large format plotters, photograph copiers, printers for digital photographic 'minilabs', video printers, PhotoCD printers, portable printers for PDAs, wallpaper printers, indoor sign printers, billboard printers, fabric printers, camera printers and fault tolerant commercial printer arrays.

Ink Jet Technologies

The embodiments of the invention use an inkjet printer type device. Of course many different devices could be used. However presently popular ink jet printing technologies are unlikely to be suitable.

The most significant problem with thermal ink jet is power consumption. This is approximately 100 times that required for high speed, and stems from the energy-inefficient means of drop ejection. This involves the rapid boiling of water to produce a vapor bubble which expels the ink. Water has a very high heat capacity, and must be superheated in thermal ink jet applications. This leads to an efficiency of around 0.02%, from electricity input to drop momentum (and increased surface area) out.

The most significant problem with piezoelectric ink jet is size and cost. Piezoelectric crystals have a very small deflection at reasonable drive voltages, and therefore require a large area for each nozzle. Also, each piezoelectric actuator must be connected to its drive circuit on a separate substrate. This is not a significant problem at the current limit of around 300 nozzles per printhead, but is a major impediment to the fabrication of pagewidth printheads with 19,200 nozzles.

Ideally, the ink jet technologies used meet the stringent requirements of in-camera digital color printing and other high quality, high speed, low cost printing applications. To meet the requirements of digital photography, new ink jet technologies have been created. The target features include:

- low power (less than 10 Watts)
- high resolution capability (1,600 dpi or more)
- photographic quality output
- low manufacturing cost
- small size (pagewidth times minimum cross section)
- high speed (<2 seconds per page).

All of these features can be met or exceeded by the ink jet systems described below with differing levels of difficulty. Forty-five different ink jet technologies have been developed by the Assignee to give a wide range of choices for high volume manufacture. These technologies form part of separate applications assigned to the present Assignee as set out in the table under the heading Cross References to Related Applications.

The ink jet designs shown here are suitable for a wide range of digital printing systems, from battery powered one-time use digital cameras, through to desktop and network printers, and through to commercial printing systems.

For ease of manufacture using standard process equipment, the printhead is designed to be a monolithic 0.5 micron CMOS chip with MEMS post processing. For color photographic applications, the printhead is 100 mm long, with a width which depends upon the ink jet type. The smallest printhead designed is IJ38, which is 0.35 mm wide, giving a chip area of 35 square mm. The printheads each contain 19,200 nozzles plus data and control circuitry.

12

Ink is supplied to the back of the printhead by injection molded plastic ink channels. The molding requires 50 micron features, which can be created using a lithographically micromachined insert in a standard injection molding tool. Ink flows through holes etched through the wafer to the nozzle chambers fabricated on the front surface of the wafer. The printhead is connected to the camera circuitry by tape automated bonding.

10 Tables of Drop-on-Demand Ink Jets

Eleven important characteristics of the fundamental operation of individual ink jet nozzles have been identified. These characteristics are largely orthogonal, and so can be elucidated as an eleven dimensional matrix. Most of the eleven axes of this matrix include entries developed by the present assignee.

The following tables form the axes of an eleven dimensional table of ink jet types.

- Actuator mechanism (18 types)
- Basic operation mode (7 types)
- Auxiliary mechanism (8 types)
- Actuator amplification or modification method (17 types)
- Actuator motion (19 types)
- Nozzle refill method (4 types)
- Method of restricting back-flow through inlet (10 types)
- Nozzle clearing method (9 types)
- Nozzle plate construction (9 types)
- Drop ejection direction (5 types)
- Ink type (7 types)

The complete eleven dimensional table represented by these axes contains 36.9 billion possible configurations of ink jet nozzle. While not all of the possible combinations result in a viable ink jet technology, many million configurations are viable. It is clearly impractical to elucidate all of the possible configurations. Instead, certain inkjet types have been investigated in detail. These are designated IJ01 to IJ45 above which matches the docket numbers in the table under the heading Cross References to Related Applications.

Other ink jet configurations can readily be derived from these forty-five examples by substituting alternative configurations along one or more of the 11 axes. Most of the IJ01 to IJ45 examples can be made into ink jet printheads with characteristics superior to any currently available ink jet technology.

Where there are prior art examples known to the inventor, one or more of these examples are listed in the examples column of the tables below. The IJ01 to IJ45 series are also listed in the examples column. In some cases, a print technology may be listed more than once in a table, where it shares characteristics with more than one entry.

Suitable applications for the ink jet technologies include: Home printers, Office network printers, Short run digital printers, Commercial print systems, Fabric printers, Pocket printers, Internet WWW printers, Video printers, Medical imaging, Wide format printers, Notebook PC printers, Fax machines, Industrial printing systems, Photocopiers, Photographic minilabs etc.

The information associated with the aforementioned 11 dimensional matrix are set out in the following tables.

 ACTUATOR MECHANISM (APPLIED ONLY TO SELECTED INK DROPS)

	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages	Examples
Thermal bubble	An electrothermal heater heats the ink to above boiling point, transferring significant heat to the aqueous ink. A bubble nucleates and quickly forms, expelling the ink. The efficiency of the process is low, with typically less than 0.05% of the electrical energy being transformed into kinetic energy of the drop.	Large force generated Simple construction No moving parts Fast operation Small chip area required for actuator	High power Ink carrier limited to water Low efficiency High temperatures required High mechanical stress Unusual materials required Large drive transistors Cavitation causes actuator failure Kogation reduces bubble formation Large print heads are difficult to fabricate	Canon Bubblejet 1979 Endo et al GB patent 2,007,162 Xerox heater-in-pit 1990 Hawkins et al U.S. Pat. No. 4,899,181 Hewlett-Packard TIJ 1982 Vaught et al U.S. Pat. No. 4,490,728
Piezoelectric	A piezoelectric crystal such as lead lanthanum zirconate (PZT) is electrically activated, and either expands, shears, or bends to apply pressure to the ink, ejecting drops.	Low power consumption Many ink types can be used Fast operation High efficiency	Very large area required for actuator Difficult to integrate with electronics High voltage drive transistors required Full pagewidth print heads impractical due to actuator size Requires electrical poling in high field strengths during manufacture	Kyser et al U.S. Pat. No. 3,946,398 Zoltan U.S. Pat. No. 3,683,212 1973 Stemme U.S. Pat. No. 3,747,120 Epson Stylus Tektronix IJ04
Electrostrictive	An electric field is used to activate electrostriction in relaxor materials such as lead lanthanum zirconate titanate (PLZT) or lead magnesium niobate (PMN).	Low power consumption Many ink types can be used Low thermal expansion Electric field strength required (approx. 3.5 V/ μ m) can be generated without difficulty Does not require electrical poling	Low maximum strain (approx. 0.01%) Large area required for actuator due to low strain Response speed is marginal (~10 μ s) High voltage drive transistors required Full pagewidth print heads impractical due to actuator size	Seiko Epson, Usui et al JP 253401/96 IJ04
Ferroelectric	An electric field is used to induce a phase transition between the antiferroelectric (AFE) and ferroelectric (FE) phase. Perovskite materials such as tin modified lead lanthanum zirconate titanate (PLZSnT) exhibit large strains of up to 1% associated with the AFE to FE phase transition.	Low power consumption Many ink types can be used Fast operation (<1 μ s) Relatively high longitudinal strain High efficiency Electric field strength of around 3 V/ μ m can be readily provided	Difficult to integrate with electronics Unusual materials such as PLZSnT are required Actuators require a large area	IJ04
Electrostatic plates	Conductive plates are separated by a compressible or fluid dielectric (usually air). Upon application of a voltage, the plates attract each other and displace ink, causing drop ejection. The conductive plates may	Low power consumption Many ink types can be used Fast operation	Difficult to operate electrostatic devices in an aqueous environment The electrostatic actuator will normally need to be separated from the ink	IJ02, IJ04

-continued

ACTUATOR MECHANISM (APPLIED ONLY TO SELECTED INK DROPS)				
	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages	Examples
	be in a comb or honeycomb structure, or stacked to increase the surface area and therefore the force.		Very large area required to achieve high forces High voltage drive transistors may be required Full pagewidth print heads are not competitive due to actuator size	
Electrostatic pull on ink	A strong electric field is applied to the ink, whereupon electrostatic attraction accelerates the ink towards the print medium.	Low current consumption Low temperature	High voltage required May be damaged by sparks due to air breakdown Required field strength increases as the drop size decreases High voltage drive transistors required Electrostatic field attracts dust	1989 Saito et al, U.S. Pat. No. 4,799,068 1989 Miura et al, U.S. Pat. No. 4,810,954 Tone-jet
Permanent magnet electromagnetic	An electromagnet directly attracts a permanent magnet, displacing ink and causing drop ejection. Rare earth magnets with a field strength around 1 Tesla can be used. Examples are: Samarium Cobalt (SaCo) and magnetic materials in the neodymium iron boron family (NdFeB, NdDyFeBNb, NdDyFeB, etc)	Low power consumption Many ink types can be used Fast operation High efficiency Easy extension from single nozzles to pagewidth print heads	Complex fabrication Permanent magnetic material such as Neodymium Iron Boron (NdFeB) required. High local currents required Copper metalization should be used for long electromigration lifetime and low resistivity Pigmented inks are usually infeasible Operating temperature limited to the Curie temperature (around 540 K)	IJ07, IJ10
Soft magnetic core electromagnetic	A solenoid induced a magnetic field in a soft magnetic core or yoke fabricated from a ferrous material such as electroplated iron alloys such as CoNiFe [1], CoFe, or NiFe alloys. Typically, the soft magnetic material is in two parts, which are normally held apart by a spring. When the solenoid is actuated, the two parts attract, displacing the ink.	Low power consumption Many ink types can be used Fast operation High efficiency Easy extension from single nozzles to pagewidth print heads	Complex fabrication Materials not usually present in a CMOS fab such as NiFe, CoNiFe, or CoFe are required High local currents required Copper metalization should be used for long electromigration lifetime and low resistivity Electroplating is required High saturation flux density is required (2.0-2.1 T is achievable with CoNiFe [1])	IJ01, IJ05, IJ08, IJ10, IJ12, IJ14, IJ15, IJ17
Lorenz force	The Lorenz force acting on a current carrying wire in a magnetic field is utilized. This allows the	Low power consumption Many ink types can be used Fast operation High efficiency	Force acts as a twisting motion Typically, only a quarter of the solenoid length provides force in a	IJ06, IJ11, IJ13, IJ16

-continued

ACTUATOR MECHANISM (APPLIED ONLY TO SELECTED INK DROPS)

	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages	Examples
Magnetostriction	<p>magnetic field to be supplied externally to the print head, for example with rare earth permanent magnets. Only the current carrying wire need be fabricated on the print-head, simplifying materials requirements.</p> <p>The actuator uses the giant magnetostrictive effect of materials such as Terfenol-D (an alloy of terbium, dysprosium and iron developed at the Naval Ordnance Laboratory, hence Ter-Fe-NOL). For best efficiency, the actuator should be pre-stressed to approx. 8 MPa.</p>	<p>Easy extension from single nozzles to pagewidth print heads</p> <p>Many ink types can be used</p> <p>Fast operation</p> <p>Easy extension from single nozzles to pagewidth print heads</p> <p>High force is available</p>	<p>useful direction</p> <p>High local currents required</p> <p>Copper metalization should be used for long electromigration lifetime and low resistivity</p> <p>Pigmented inks are usually infeasible</p> <p>Force acts as a twisting motion</p> <p>Unusual materials such as Terfenol-D are required</p> <p>High local currents required</p> <p>Copper metalization should be used for long electromigration lifetime and low resistivity</p> <p>Pre-stressing may be required</p>	<p>Fischenbeck, U.S. Pat. No. 4,032,929 IJ25</p>
Surface tension reduction	<p>Ink under positive pressure is held in a nozzle by surface tension. The surface tension of the ink is reduced below the bubble threshold, causing the ink to egress from the nozzle.</p>	<p>Low power consumption</p> <p>Simple construction</p> <p>No unusual materials required in fabrication</p> <p>High efficiency</p> <p>Easy extension from single nozzles to pagewidth print heads</p>	<p>Requires supplementary force to effect drop separation</p> <p>Requires special ink surfactants</p> <p>Speed may be limited by surfactant properties</p>	<p>Silverbrook, EP 0771 658 A2 and related patent applications</p>
Viscosity reduction	<p>The ink viscosity is locally reduced to select which drops are to be ejected. A viscosity reduction can be achieved electrothermally with most inks, but special inks can be engineered for a 100:1 viscosity reduction.</p>	<p>Simple construction</p> <p>No unusual materials required in fabrication</p> <p>Easy extension from single nozzles to pagewidth print heads</p>	<p>Requires supplementary force to effect drop separation</p> <p>Requires special ink viscosity properties</p> <p>High speed is difficult to achieve</p> <p>Requires oscillating ink pressure</p> <p>A high temperature difference (typically 80 degrees) is required</p>	<p>Silverbrook, EP 0771 658 A2 and related patent applications</p>
Acoustic	<p>An acoustic wave is generated and focussed upon the drop ejection region.</p>	<p>Can operate without a nozzle plate</p>	<p>Complex drive circuitry</p> <p>Complex fabrication</p> <p>Low efficiency</p> <p>Poor control of drop position</p> <p>Poor control of drop volume</p>	<p>1993 Hadimioglu et al, EUP 550,192</p> <p>1993 Elrod et al, EUP 572,220</p>
Thermoelastic bend actuator	<p>An actuator which relies upon differential thermal expansion upon Joule heating is used.</p>	<p>Low power consumption</p> <p>Many ink types can be used</p> <p>Simple planar fabrication</p> <p>Small chip area required for each actuator</p>	<p>Efficient aqueous operation requires a thermal insulator on the hot side</p> <p>Corrosion prevention can be difficult</p> <p>Pigmented inks may be infeasible,</p>	<p>IJ03, IJ09, IJ17, IJ18, IJ19, IJ20, IJ21, IJ22, IJ23, IJ24, IJ27, IJ28, IJ29, IJ30, IJ31, IJ32, IJ33, IJ34, IJ35, IJ36, IJ37, IJ38, IJ39, IJ40, IJ41</p>

-continued

ACTUATOR MECHANISM (APPLIED ONLY TO SELECTED INK DROPS)

Description	Advantages	Disadvantages	Examples	
High CTE thermoelastic actuator	<p>A material with a very high coefficient of thermal expansion (CTE) such as polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE) is used. As high CTE materials are usually non-conductive, a heater fabricated from a conductive material is incorporated. A 50 μm long PTFE bend actuator with polysilicon heater and 15 mW power input can provide 180 μN force and 10 μm deflection. Actuator motions include:</p> <p>Bend Push Buckle Rotate</p>	<p>Fast operation High efficiency CMOS compatible voltages and currents Standard MEMS processes can be used Easy extension from single nozzles to pagewidth print heads</p> <p>High force can be generated Three methods of PTFE deposition are under development: chemical vapor deposition (CVD), spin coating, and evaporation PTFE is a candidate for low dielectric constant insulation in ULSI Very low power consumption Many ink types can be used Simple planar fabrication Small chip area required for each actuator</p> <p>Fast operation High efficiency CMOS compatible voltages and currents Easy extension from single nozzles to pagewidth print heads</p>	<p>as pigment particles may jam the bend actuator</p> <p>Requires special material (e.g. PTFE) Requires a PTFE deposition process, which is not yet standard in ULSI fabs PTFE deposition cannot be followed with high temperature (above 350° C.) processing Pigmented inks may be infeasible, as pigment particles may jam the bend actuator</p>	<p>IJ09, IJ17, IJ18, IJ20, IJ21, IJ22, IJ23, IJ24, IJ27, IJ28, IJ29, IJ30, IJ31, IJ42, IJ43, IJ44</p>
Conduct-ive polymer thermoelastic actuator	<p>A polymer with a high coefficient of thermal expansion (such as PTFE) is doped with conducting substances to increase its conductivity to about 3 orders of magnitude below that of copper. The conducting polymer expands when resistively heated. Examples of conducting dopants include:</p> <p>Carbon nanotubes Metal fibers Conductive polymers such as doped polythiophene Carbon granules</p>	<p>High force can be generated Very low power consumption Many ink types can be used Simple planar fabrication Small chip area required for each actuator</p> <p>Fast operation High efficiency CMOS compatible voltages and currents Easy extension from single nozzles to pagewidth print heads</p>	<p>Requires special materials development (High CTE conductive polymer) Requires a PTFE deposition process, which is not yet standard in ULSI fabs PTFE deposition cannot be followed with high temperature (above 350° C.) processing Evaporation and CVD deposition techniques cannot be used Pigmented inks may be infeasible, as pigment particles may jam the bend actuator</p>	<p>IJ24</p>
Shape memory alloy	<p>A shape memory alloy such as TiNi (also known as Nitinol - Nickel Titanium alloy developed at the Naval Ordnance Laboratory) is thermally switched between its weak</p>	<p>High force is available (stresses of hundreds of MPa) Large strain is available (more than 3%) High corrosion resistance</p>	<p>Fatigue limits maximum number of cycles Low strain (1%) is required to extend fatigue resistance Cycle rate limited by heat</p>	<p>IJ26</p>

-continued

ACTUATOR MECHANISM (APPLIED ONLY TO SELECTED INK DROPS)

	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages	Examples
	martensitic state and its high stiffness austenic state. The shape of the actuator in its martensitic state is deformed relative to the austenic shape. The shape change causes ejection of a drop.	Simple construction Easy extension from single nozzles to pagewidth print heads Low voltage operation	removal Requires unusual materials (TiNi) The latent heat of transformation must be provided High current operation Requires pre-stressing to distort the martensitic state	
Linear Magnetic Actuator	Linear magnetic actuators include the Linear Induction Actuator (LIA), Linear Permanent Magnet Synchronous Actuator (LPMSA), Linear Reluctance Synchronous Actuator (LRSA), Linear Switched Reluctance Actuator (LSRA), and the Linear Stepper Actuator (LSA).	Linear Magnetic actuators can be constructed with high thrust, long travel, and high efficiency using planar semiconductor fabrication techniques Long actuator travel is available Medium force is available Low voltage operation	Requires unusual semiconductor materials such as soft magnetic alloys (e.g. CoNiFe) Some varieties also require permanent magnetic materials such as Neodymium iron boron (NdFeB) Requires complex multi-phase drive circuitry High current operation	IJ12

BASIC OPERATION MODE

	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages	Examples
Actuator directly pushes ink	This is the simplest mode of operation: the actuator directly supplies sufficient kinetic energy to expel the drop. The drop must have a sufficient velocity to overcome the surface tension.	Simple operation No external fields required Satellite drops can be avoided if drop velocity is less than 4 m/s Can be efficient, depending upon the actuator used	Drop repetition rate is usually limited to around 10 kHz. However, this is not fundamental to the method, but is related to the refill method normally used All of the drop kinetic energy must be provided by the actuator Satellite drops usually form if drop velocity is greater than 4.5 m/s	Thermal ink jet Piezoelectric ink jet IJ01, IJ02, IJ03, IJ04, IJ05, IJ06, IJ07, IJ09, IJ11, IJ12, IJ14, IJ16, IJ20, IJ22, IJ23, IJ24, IJ25, IJ26, IJ27, IJ28, IJ29, IJ30, IJ31, IJ32, IJ33, IJ34, IJ35, IJ36, IJ37, IJ38, IJ39, IJ40, IJ41, IJ42, IJ43, IJ44
Proximity	The drops to be printed are selected by some manner (e.g. thermally induced surface tension reduction of pressurized ink). Selected drops are separated from the ink in the nozzle by contact with the print medium or a transfer roller.	Very simple print head fabrication can be used The drop selection means does not need to provide the energy required to separate the drop from the nozzle	Requires close proximity between the print head and the print media or transfer roller May require two print heads printing alternate rows of the image Monolithic color print heads are difficult	Silverbrook, EP 0771 658 A2 and related patent applications
Electrostatic pull on ink	The drops to be printed are selected by some manner (e.g. thermally induced surface tension reduction of pressurized ink). Selected drops are	Very simple print head fabrication can be used The drop selection means does not need to provide the energy required to separate	Requires very high electrostatic field Electrostatic field for small nozzle sizes is above air breakdown Electrostatic field	Silverbrook, EP 0771 658 A2 and related patent applications Tone-Jet

-continued

<u>BASIC OPERATION MODE</u>				
	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages	Examples
	separated from the ink in the nozzle by a strong electric field.	the drop from the nozzle	may attract dust	
Magnetic pull on ink	The drops to be printed are selected by some manner (e.g. thermally induced surface tension reduction of pressurized ink). Selected drops are separated from the ink in the nozzle by a strong magnetic field acting on the magnetic ink.	Very simple print head fabrication can be used The drop selection means does not need to provide the energy required to separate the drop from the nozzle	Requires magnetic ink Ink colors other than black are difficult Requires very high magnetic fields	Silverbrook, EP 0771 658 A2 and related patent applications
Shutter	The actuator moves a shutter to block ink flow to the nozzle. The ink pressure is pulsed at a multiple of the drop ejection frequency.	High speed (>50 kHz) operation can be achieved due to reduced refill time Drop timing can be very accurate The actuator energy can be very low	Moving parts are required Requires ink pressure modulator Friction and wear must be considered Stiction is possible	IJ13, IJ17, IJ21
Shuttered grill	The actuator moves a shutter to block ink flow through a grill to the nozzle. The shutter movement need only be equal to the width of the grill holes.	Actuators with small travel can be used Actuators with small force can be used High speed (>50 kHz) operation can be achieved	Moving parts are required Requires ink pressure modulator Friction and wear must be considered Stiction is possible	IJ08, IJ15, IJ18, IJ19
Pulsed magnetic pull on ink pusher	A pulsed magnetic field attracts an 'ink pusher' at the drop ejection frequency. An actuator controls a catch, which prevents the ink pusher from moving when a drop is not to be ejected.	Extremely low energy operation is possible No heat dissipation problems	Requires an external pulsed magnetic field Requires special materials for both the actuator and the ink pusher Complex construction	IJ10

AUXILIARY MECHANISM (APPLIED TO ALL NOZZLES)

	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages	Examples
None	The actuator directly fires the ink drop, and there is no external field or other mechanism required.	Simplicity of construction Simplicity of operation Small physical size	Drop ejection energy must be supplied by individual nozzle actuator	Most ink jets, including piezoelectric and thermal bubble. IJ01, IJ02, IJ03, IJ04, IJ05, IJ07, IJ09, IJ11, IJ12, IJ14, IJ20, IJ22, IJ23, IJ24, IJ25, IJ26, IJ27, IJ28, IJ29, IJ30, IJ31, IJ32, IJ33, IJ34, IJ35, IJ36, IJ37, IJ38, IJ39, IJ40, IJ41, IJ42, IJ43, IJ44
Oscillating ink pressure (including acoustic stimulation)	The ink pressure oscillates, providing much of the drop ejection energy. The actuator selects which drops are to be fired	Oscillating ink pressure can provide a refill pulse, allowing higher operating speed The actuators	Requires external ink pressure oscillator Ink pressure phase and amplitude must be carefully	Silverbrook, EP 0771 658 A2 and related patent applications IJ08, IJ13, IJ15, IJ17, IJ18, IJ19,

-continued

AUXILIARY MECHANISM (APPLIED TO ALL NOZZLES)

Description	Advantages	Disadvantages	Examples	
	by selectively blocking or enabling nozzles. The ink pressure oscillation may be achieved by vibrating the print head, or preferably by an actuator in the ink supply.	may operate with much lower energy Acoustic lenses can be used to focus the sound on the nozzles	controlled Acoustic reflections in the ink chamber must be designed for	IJ21
Media proximity	The print head is placed in close proximity to the print medium. Selected drops protrude from the print head further than unselected drops, and contact the print medium. The drop soaks into the medium fast enough to cause drop separation.	Low power High accuracy Simple print head construction	Precision assembly required Paper fibers may cause problems Cannot print on rough substrates	Silverbrook, EP 0771 658 A2 and related patent applications
Transfer roller	Drops are printed to a transfer roller instead of straight to the print medium. A transfer roller can also be used for proximity drop separation.	High accuracy Wide range of print substrates can be used Ink can be dried on the transfer roller	Bulky Expensive Complex construction	Silverbrook, EP 0771 658 A2 and related patent applications Tektronix hot melt piezoelectric ink jet Any of the IJ series
Electrostatic	An electric field is used to accelerate selected drops towards the print medium.	Low power Simple print head construction	Field strength required for separation of small drops is near or above air breakdown	Silverbrook, EP 0771 658 A2 and related patent applications Tone-Jet
Direct magnetic field	A magnetic field is used to accelerate selected drops of magnetic ink towards the print medium.	Low power Simple print head construction	Requires magnetic ink Requires strong magnetic field	Silverbrook, EP 0771 658 A2 and related patent applications
Cross magnetic field	The print head is placed in a constant magnetic field. The Lorenz force in a current carrying wire is used to move the actuator.	Does not require magnetic materials to be integrated in the print head manufacturing process	Requires external magnet Current densities may be high, resulting in electromigration problems	IJ06, IJ16
Pulsed magnetic field	A pulsed magnetic field is used to cyclically attract a paddle, which pushes on the ink. A small actuator moves a catch, which selectively prevents the paddle from moving.	Very low power operation is possible Small print head size	Complex print head construction Magnetic materials required in print head	IJ10

ACTUATOR AMPLIFICATION OR MODIFICATION METHOD

Description	Advantages	Disadvantages	Examples	
None	No actuator mechanical amplification is used. The actuator directly drives the drop ejection process.	Operational simplicity	Many actuator mechanisms have insufficient travel, or insufficient force, to efficiently drive the drop ejection process	Thermal Bubble Ink jet IJ01, IJ02, IJ06, IJ07, IJ16, IJ25, IJ26

-continued

ACTUATOR AMPLIFICATION OR MODIFICATION METHOD				
	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages	Examples
Differential expansion bend actuator	An actuator material expands more on one side than on the other. The expansion may be thermal, piezoelectric, magnetostrictive, or other mechanism. The bend actuator converts a high force low travel actuator mechanism to high travel, lower force mechanism.	Provides greater travel in a reduced print head area	High stresses are involved Care must be taken that the materials do not delaminate Residual bend resulting from high temperature or high stress during formation	Piezoelectric IJ03, IJ09, IJ17, IJ18, IJ19, IJ20, IJ21, IJ22, IJ23, IJ24, IJ27, IJ29, IJ30, IJ31, IJ32, IJ33, IJ34, IJ35, IJ36, IJ37, IJ38, IJ39, IJ42, IJ43, IJ44
Transient bend actuator	A trilayer bend actuator where the two outside layers are identical. This cancels bend due to ambient temperature and residual stress. The actuator only responds to transient heating of one side or the other.	Very good temperature stability High speed, as a new drop can be fired before heat dissipates Cancels residual stress of formation	High stresses are involved Care must be taken that the materials do not delaminate	IJ40, IJ41
Reverse spring	The actuator loads a spring. When the actuator is turned off, the spring releases. This can reverse the force/distance curve of the actuator to make it compatible with the force/time requirements of the drop ejection.	Better coupling to the ink	Fabrication complexity High stress in the spring	IJ05, IJ11
Actuator stack	A series of thin actuators are stacked. This can be appropriate where actuators require high electric field strength, such as electrostatic and piezoelectric actuators.	Increased travel Reduced drive voltage	Increased fabrication complexity Increased possibility of short circuits due to pinholes	Some piezoelectric ink jets IJ04
Multiple actuators	Multiple smaller actuators are used simultaneously to move the ink. Each actuator need provide only a portion of the force required.	Increases the force available from an actuator Multiple actuators can be positioned to control ink flow accurately	Actuator forces may not add linearly, reducing efficiency	IJ12, IJ13, IJ18, IJ20, IJ22, IJ28, IJ42, IJ43
Linear Spring	A linear spring is used to transform a motion with small travel and high force into a longer travel, lower force motion.	Matches low travel actuator with higher travel requirements Non-contact method of motion transformation	Requires print head area for the spring	IJ15
Coiled actuator	A bend actuator is coiled to provide greater travel in a reduced chip area.	Increases travel Reduces chip area Planar implementations are relatively easy to fabricate.	Generally restricted to planar implementations due to extreme fabrication difficulty in other orientations.	IJ17, IJ21, IJ34, IJ35
Flexure bend actuator	A bend actuator has a small region near the fixture point, which flexes much more readily than the remainder of the actuator. The actuator flexing is effectively	Simple means of increasing travel of a bend actuator	Care must be taken not to exceed the elastic limit in the flexure area Stress distribution is very uneven Difficult to	IJ10, IJ19, IJ33

-continued

ACTUATOR AMPLIFICATION OR MODIFICATION METHOD				
Description	Advantages	Disadvantages	Examples	
	converted from an even coiling to an angular bend, resulting in greater travel of the actuator tip.		accurately model with finite element analysis	
Catch	The actuator controls a small catch. The catch either enables or disables movement of an ink pusher that is controlled in a bulk manner.	Very low actuator energy Very small actuator size	Complex construction Requires external force Unsuitable for pigmented inks	IJ10
Gears	Gears can be used to increase travel at the expense of duration. Circular gears, rack and pinion, ratchets, and other gearing methods can be used.	Low force, low travel actuators can be used Can be fabricated using standard surface MEMS processes	Moving parts are required Several actuator cycles are required More complex drive electronics Complex construction Friction, friction, and wear are possible	IJ13
Buckle plate	A buckle plate can be used to change a slow actuator into a fast motion. It can also convert a high force, low travel actuator into a high travel, medium force motion.	Very fast movement achievable	Must stay within elastic limits of the materials for long device life High stresses involved Generally high power requirement	S. Hirata et al, "An Ink-jet Head Using Diaphragm Microactuator", Proc. IEEE MEMS, February 1996, pp 418-423. IJ18, IJ27
Tapered magnetic pole	A tapered magnetic pole can increase travel at the expense of force.	Linearizes the magnetic force/distance curve	Complex construction	IJ14
Lever	A lever and fulcrum is used to transform a motion with small travel and high force into a motion with longer travel and lower force. The lever can also reverse the direction of travel.	Matches low travel actuator with higher travel requirements Fulcrum area has no linear movement, and can be used for a fluid seal	High stress around the fulcrum	IJ32, IJ36, IJ37
Rotary impeller	The actuator is connected to a rotary impeller. A small angular deflection of the actuator results in a rotation of the impeller vanes, which push the ink against stationary vanes and out of the nozzle.	High mechanical advantage The ratio of force to travel of the actuator can be matched to the nozzle requirements by varying the number of impeller vanes	Complex construction Unsuitable for pigmented inks	IJ28
Acoustic lens	A refractive or diffractive (e.g. zone plate) acoustic lens is used to concentrate sound waves.	No moving parts	Large area required Only relevant for acoustic ink jets	1993 Hadimioglu et al, EUP 550,192 1993 Elrod et al, EUP 572,220
Sharp conductive point	A sharp point is used to concentrate an electrostatic field.	Simple construction	Difficult to fabricate using standard VLSI processes for a surface ejecting ink-jet Only relevant for electrostatic ink jets	Tone-jet

<u>ACTUATOR MOTION</u>				
	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages	Examples
Volume expansion	The volume of the actuator changes, pushing the ink in all directions.	Simple construction in the case of thermal ink jet	High energy is typically required to achieve volume expansion. This leads to thermal stress, cavitation, and kogation in thermal ink jet implementations	Hewlett-Packard Thermal Ink jet Canon Bubblejet
Linear, normal to chip surface	The actuator moves in a direction normal to the print head surface. The nozzle is typically in the line of movement.	Efficient coupling to ink drops ejected normal to the surface	High fabrication complexity may be required to achieve perpendicular motion	IJ01, IJ02, IJ04, IJ07, IJ11, IJ14
Parallel to chip surface	The actuator moves parallel to the print head surface. Drop ejection may still be normal to the surface.	Suitable for planar fabrication	Fabrication complexity Friction Stiction	IJ12, IJ13, IJ15, IJ33, IJ34, IJ35, IJ36
Membrane push	An actuator with a high force but small area is used to push a stiff membrane that is in contact with the ink.	The effective area of the actuator becomes the membrane area	Fabrication complexity Actuator size Difficulty of integration in a VLSI process	1982 Howkins U.S. Pat. No. 4,459,601
Rotary	The actuator causes the rotation of some element, such a grill or impeller	Rotary levers may be used to increase travel Small chip area requirements	Device complexity May have friction at a pivot point	IJ05, IJ08, IJ13, IJ28
Bend	The actuator bends when energized. This may be due to differential thermal expansion, piezoelectric expansion, magnetostriction, or other form of relative dimensional change.	A very small change in dimensions can be converted to a large motion.	Requires the actuator to be made from at least two distinct layers, or to have a thermal difference across the actuator	1970 Kyser et al U.S. Pat. No. 3,946,398 1973 Stemme U.S. Pat. No. 3,747,120 IJ03, IJ09, IJ10, IJ19, IJ23, IJ24, IJ25, IJ29, IJ30, IJ31, IJ33, IJ34, IJ35
Swivel	The actuator swivels around a central pivot. This motion is suitable where there are opposite forces applied to opposite sides of the paddle, e.g. Lorenz force.	Allows operation where the net linear force on the paddle is zero Small chip area requirements	Inefficient coupling to the ink motion	IJ06
Straighten	The actuator is normally bent, and straightens when energized.	Can be used with shape memory alloys where the austenitic phase is planar	Requires careful balance of stresses to ensure that the quiescent bend is accurate	IJ26, IJ32
Double bend	The actuator bends in one direction when one element is energized, and bends the other way when another element is energized.	One actuator can be used to power two nozzles. Reduced chip size. Not sensitive to ambient temperature	Difficult to make the drops ejected by both bend directions identical. A small efficiency loss compared to equivalent single bend actuators.	IJ36, IJ37, IJ38
Shear	Energizing the actuator causes a shear motion in the actuator material.	Can increase the effective travel of piezoelectric actuators	Not readily applicable to other actuator mechanisms	1985 Fishbeck U.S. Pat. No. 4,584,590
Radial constriction	The actuator squeezes an ink reservoir, forcing ink from a constricted nozzle.	Relatively easy to fabricate single nozzles from glass tubing as macroscopic structures	High force required Inefficient Difficult to integrate with VLSI processes	1970 Zoltan U.S. Pat. No. 3,683,212
Coil/uncoil	A coiled actuator uncoils or coils more	Easy to fabricate as a planar VLSI	Difficult to fabricate for non-	IJ17, IJ21, IJ34, IJ35

-continued

<u>ACTUATOR MOTION</u>				
	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages	Examples
	tightly. The motion of the free end of the actuator ejects the ink.	process Small area required, therefore low cost	planar devices Poor out-of-plane stiffness	
Bow	The actuator bows (or buckles) in the middle when energized.	Can increase the speed of travel Mechanically rigid	Maximum travel is constrained High force required	IJ16, IJ18, IJ27
Push-Pull	Two actuators control a shutter. One actuator pulls the shutter, and the other pushes it.	The structure is pinned at both ends, so has a high out-of-plane rigidity	Not readily suitable for ink jets which directly push the ink	IJ18
Curl inwards	A set of actuators curl inwards to reduce the volume of ink that they enclose.	Good fluid flow to the region behind the actuator increases efficiency	Design complexity	IJ20, IJ42
Curl outwards	A set of actuators curl outwards, pressurizing ink in a chamber surrounding the actuators, and expelling ink from a nozzle in the chamber.	Relatively simple construction	Relatively large chip area	IJ43
Iris	Multiple vanes enclose a volume of ink. These simultaneously rotate, reducing the volume between the vanes.	High efficiency Small chip area	High fabrication complexity Not suitable for pigmented inks	IJ22
Acoustic vibration	The actuator vibrates at a high frequency.	The actuator can be physically distant from the ink	Large area required for efficient operation at useful frequencies Acoustic coupling and crosstalk Complex drive circuitry Poor control of drop volume and position	1993 Hadimioglu et al, EUP 550,192 1993 Elrod et al, EUP 572,220
None	In various ink jet designs the actuator does not move.	No moving parts	Various other tradeoffs are required to eliminate moving parts	Silverbrook, EP 0771 658 A2 and related patent applications Tone-jet

NOZZLE REFILL METHOD

	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages	Examples
Surface tension	This is the normal way that ink jets are refilled. After the actuator is energized, it typically returns rapidly to its normal position. This rapid return sucks in air through the nozzle opening. The ink surface tension at the nozzle then exerts a small force restoring the meniscus to a minimum area. This force refills the nozzle.	Fabrication simplicity Operational simplicity	Low speed Surface tension force relatively small compared to actuator force Long refill time usually dominates the total repetition rate	Thermal ink jet Piezoelectric ink jet IJ01-IJ07, IJ10-IJ14, IJ16, IJ20, IJ22-IJ45
Shuttered oscillating ink pressure	Ink to the nozzle chamber is provided at a pressure that oscillates at twice the	High speed Low actuator energy, as the actuator need only	Requires common ink pressure oscillator May not be	IJ08, IJ13, IJ15, IJ17, IJ18, IJ19, IJ21

-continued

<u>NOZZLE REFILL METHOD</u>				
	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages	Examples
	drop ejection frequency. When a drop is to be ejected, the shutter is opened for 3 half cycles: drop ejection, actuator return, and refill. The shutter is then closed to prevent the nozzle chamber emptying during the next negative pressure cycle.	open or close the shutter, instead of ejecting the ink drop	suitable for pigmented inks	
Refill actuator	After the main actuator has ejected a drop a second (refill) actuator is energized. The refill actuator pushes ink into the nozzle chamber. The refill actuator returns slowly, to prevent its return from emptying the chamber again.	High speed, as the nozzle is actively refilled	Requires two independent actuators per nozzle	IJ09
Positive ink pressure	The ink is held a slight positive pressure. After the ink drop is ejected, the nozzle chamber fills quickly as surface tension and ink pressure both operate to refill the nozzle.	High refill rate, therefore a high drop repetition rate is possible	Surface spill must be prevented Highly hydrophobic print head surfaces are required	Silverbrook, EP 0771 658 A2 and related patent applications Alternative for: IJ01-IJ07, IJ10-IJ14, IJ16, IJ20, IJ22-IJ45

METHOD OF RESTRICTING BACK-FLOW THROUGH INLET

	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages	Examples
Long inlet channel	The ink inlet channel to the nozzle chamber is made long and relatively narrow, relying on viscous drag to reduce inlet back-flow.	Design simplicity Operational simplicity Reduces crosstalk	Restricts refill rate May result in a relatively large chip area Only partially effective	Thermal ink jet Piezoelectric ink jet IJ42, IJ43
Positive ink pressure	The ink is under a positive pressure, so that in the quiescent state some of the ink drop already protrudes from the nozzle. This reduces the pressure in the nozzle chamber which is required to eject a certain volume of ink. The reduction in chamber pressure results in a reduction in ink pushed out through the inlet.	Drop selection and separation forces can be reduced Fast refill time	Requires a method (such as a nozzle rim or hydrophobizing, or both) to prevent flooding of the ejection surface of the print head.	Silverbrook, EP 0771 658 A2 and related patent applications Possible operation of the following: IJ01-IJ07, IJ09-IJ12, IJ14, IJ16, IJ20, IJ22,, IJ23-IJ34, IJ36-IJ41, IJ44
Baffle	One or more baffles are placed in the inlet ink flow. When the actuator is energized, the rapid ink movement creates eddies which restrict the flow through the inlet. The slower refill	The refill rate is not as restricted as the long inlet method. Reduces crosstalk	Design complexity May increase fabrication complexity (e.g. Tektronix hot melt Piezoelectric print heads).	HP Thermal Ink Jet Tektronix piezoelectric ink jet

-continued

METHOD OF RESTRICTING BACK-FLOW THROUGH INLET

Description	Advantages	Disadvantages	Examples	
Flexible flap restricts inlet	In this method recently disclosed by Canon, the expanding actuator (bubble) pushes on a flexible flap that restricts the inlet.	Significantly reduces back-flow for edge-shooter thermal ink jet devices	Not applicable to most ink jet configurations Increased fabrication complexity Inelastic deformation of polymer flap results in creep over extended use	Canon
Inlet filter	A filter is located between the ink inlet and the nozzle chamber. The filter has a multitude of small holes or slots, restricting ink flow. The filter also removes particles which may block the nozzle.	Additional advantage of ink filtration Ink filter may be fabricated with no additional process steps	Restricts refill rate May result in complex construction	IJ04, IJ12, IJ24, IJ27, IJ29, IJ30
Small inlet compared to nozzle	The ink inlet channel to the nozzle chamber has a substantially smaller cross section than that of the nozzle, resulting in easier ink egress out of the nozzle than out of the inlet.	Design simplicity	Restricts refill rate May result in a relatively large chip area Only partially effective	IJ02, IJ37, IJ44
Inlet shutter	A secondary actuator controls the position of a shutter, closing off the ink inlet when the main actuator is energized.	Increases speed of the ink-jet print head operation	Requires separate refill actuator and drive circuit	IJ09
The inlet is located behind the ink-pushing surface	The method avoids the problem of inlet back-flow by arranging the ink-pushing surface of the actuator between the inlet and the nozzle.	Back-flow problem is eliminated	Requires careful design to minimize the negative pressure behind the paddle	IJ01, IJ03, IJ05, IJ06, IJ07, IJ10, IJ11, IJ14, IJ16, IJ22, IJ23, IJ25, IJ28, IJ31, IJ32, IJ33, IJ34, IJ35, IJ36, IJ39, IJ40, IJ41
Part of the actuator moves to shut off the inlet	The actuator and a wall of the ink chamber are arranged so that the motion of the actuator closes off the inlet.	Significant reductions in back-flow can be achieved Compact designs possible	Small increase in fabrication complexity	IJ07, IJ20, IJ26, IJ38
Nozzle actuator does not result in ink back-flow	In some configurations of ink jet, there is no expansion or movement of an actuator which may cause ink back-flow through the inlet.	Ink back-flow problem is eliminated	None related to ink back-flow on actuation	Silverbrook, EP 0771 658 A2 and related patent applications Valve-jet Tone-jet

NOZZLE CLEARING METHOD

Description	Advantages	Disadvantages	Examples	
Normal nozzle firing	All of the nozzles are fired periodically, before the ink has a chance to dry. When not in use the nozzles	No added complexity on the print head	May not be sufficient to displace dried ink	Most ink jet systems IJ01, IJ02, IJ03, IJ04, IJ05, IJ06, IJ07, IJ09, IJ10,

-continued

NOZZLE CLEARING METHOD				
Description	Advantages	Disadvantages	Examples	
	are sealed (capped) against air. The nozzle firing is usually performed during a special clearing cycle, after first moving the print head to a cleaning station.		IJ11, IJ12, IJ14, IJ16, IJ20, IJ22, IJ23, IJ24, IJ25, IJ26, IJ27, IJ28, IJ29, IJ30, IJ31, IJ32, IJ33, IJ34, IJ36, IJ37, IJ38, IJ39, IJ40,, IJ41, IJ42, IJ43, IJ44,, IJ45	
Extra power to ink heater	In systems which heat the ink, but do not boil it under normal situations, nozzle clearing can be achieved by over-powering the heater and boiling ink at the nozzle.	Can be highly effective if the heater is adjacent to the nozzle	Requires higher drive voltage for clearing May require larger drive transistors	Silverbrook, EP 0771 658 A2 and related patent applications
Rapid succession of actuator pulses	The actuator is fired in rapid succession. In some configurations, this may cause heat build-up at the nozzle which boils the ink, clearing the nozzle. In other situations, it may cause sufficient vibrations to dislodge clogged nozzles.	Does not require extra drive circuits on the print head Can be readily controlled and initiated by digital logic	Effectiveness depends substantially upon the configuration of the ink jet nozzle	May be used with: IJ01, IJ02, IJ03, IJ04, IJ05, IJ06, IJ07, IJ09, IJ10, IJ11, IJ14, IJ16, IJ20, IJ22, IJ23, IJ24, IJ25, IJ27, IJ28, IJ29, IJ30, IJ31, IJ32, IJ33, IJ34, IJ36, IJ37, IJ38, IJ39, IJ40, IJ41, IJ42, IJ43, IJ44, IJ45
Extra power to ink pushing actuator	Where an actuator is not normally driven to the limit of its motion, nozzle clearing may be assisted by providing an enhanced drive signal to the actuator.	A simple solution where applicable	Not suitable where there is a hard limit to actuator movement	May be used with: IJ03, IJ09, IJ16, IJ20, IJ23, IJ24, IJ25, IJ27, IJ29, IJ30, IJ31, IJ32, IJ39, IJ40, IJ41, IJ42, IJ43, IJ44, IJ45
Acoustic resonance	An ultrasonic wave is applied to the ink chamber. This wave is of an appropriate amplitude and frequency to cause sufficient force at the nozzle to clear blockages. This is easiest to achieve if the ultrasonic wave is at a resonant frequency of the ink cavity.	A high nozzle clearing capability can be achieved May be implemented at very low cost in systems which already include acoustic actuators	High implementation cost if system does not already include an acoustic actuator	IJ08, IJ13, IJ15, IJ17, IJ18, IJ19, IJ21
Nozzle clearing plate	A microfabricated plate is pushed against the nozzles. The plate has a post for every nozzle. A post moves through each nozzle, displacing dried ink.	Can clear severely clogged nozzles	Accurate mechanical alignment is required Moving parts are required There is risk of damage to the nozzles Accurate fabrication is required	Silverbrook, EP 0771 658 A2 and related patent applications
Ink pressure pulse	The pressure of the ink is temporarily increased so that ink streams from all of the nozzles. This may be used in conjunction with actuator energizing.	May be effective where other methods cannot be used	Requires pressure pump or other pressure actuator Expensive Wasteful of ink	May be used with all IJ series ink jets

-continued

NOZZLE CLEARING METHOD

	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages	Examples
Print head wiper	A flexible 'blade' is wiped across the print head surface. The blade is usually fabricated from a flexible polymer, e.g. rubber or synthetic elastomer.	Effective for planar print head surfaces Low cost	Difficult to use if print head surface is non-planar or very fragile Requires mechanical parts Blade can wear out in high volume print systems	Many ink jet systems
Separate ink boiling heater	A separate heater is provided at the nozzle although the normal drop e-jection mechanism does not require it. The heaters do not require individual drive circuits, as many nozzles can be cleared simultaneously, and no imaging is required.	Can be effective where other nozzle clearing methods cannot be used Can be implemented at no additional cost in some ink jet configurations	Fabrication complexity	Can be used with many IJ series ink jets

NOZZLE PLATE CONSTRUCTION

	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages	Examples
Electroformed nickel	A nozzle plate is separately fabricated from electroformed nickel, and bonded to the print head chip.	Fabrication simplicity	High temperatures and pressures are required to bond nozzle plate Minimum thickness constraints Differential thermal expansion	Hewlett Packard Thermal Ink jet
Laser ablated or drilled polymer	Individual nozzle holes are ablated by an intense UV laser in a nozzle plate, which is typically a polymer such as polyimide or polysulphone	No masks required Can be quite fast Some control over nozzle profile is possible Equipment required is relatively low cost	Each hole must be individually formed Special equipment required Slow where there are many thousands of nozzles per print head May produce thin burrs at exit holes	Canon Bubblejet 1988 Sercel et al., SPIE, Vol. 998 Excimer Beam Applications, pp. 76-83 1993 Watanabe et al., U.S. Pat. No. 5,208,604
Silicon micromachined	A separate nozzle plate is micromachined from single crystal silicon, and bonded to the print head wafer.	High accuracy is attainable	Two part construction High cost Requires precision alignment Nozzles may be clogged by adhesive	K. Bean, IEEE Transactions on Electron Devices, Vol. ED-25, No. 10, 1978, pp 1185-1195 Xerox 1990 Hawkins et al., U.S. Pat. No. 4,899,181
Glass capillaries	Fine glass capillaries are drawn from glass tubing. This method has been used for making individual nozzles, but is difficult to use for bulk manufacturing of print heads with thousands of nozzles.	No expensive equipment required Simple to make single nozzles	Very small nozzle sizes are difficult to form Not suited for mass production	1970 Zoltan U.S. Pat. No. 3,683,212
Monolithic, surface micromachined using VLSI lithographic processes	The nozzle plate is deposited as a layer using standard VLSI deposition techniques. Nozzles are etched in the nozzle plate using	High accuracy (<1 μm) Monolithic Low cost Existing processes can be	Requires sacrificial layer under the nozzle plate to form the nozzle chamber Surface may be	Silverbrook, EP 0771 658 A2 and related patent applications IJ01, IJ02, IJ04, IJ11, IJ12, IJ17,

-continued

<u>NOZZLE PLATE CONSTRUCTION</u>				
Description	Advantages	Disadvantages	Examples	
	VLSI lithography and etching.	used	fragile to the touch	IJ18, IJ20, IJ22, IJ24, IJ27, IJ28, IJ29, IJ30, IJ31, IJ32, IJ33, IJ34, IJ36, IJ37, IJ38, IJ39, IJ40, IJ41, IJ42, IJ43, IJ44
Monolithic, etched through substrate	The nozzle plate is a buried etch stop in the wafer. Nozzle chambers are etched in the front of the wafer, and the wafer is thinned from the back side. Nozzles are then etched in the etch stop layer.	High accuracy (<1 μm) Monolithic Low cost No differential expansion	Requires long etch times Requires a support wafer	IJ03, IJ05, IJ06, IJ07, IJ08, IJ09, IJ10, IJ13, IJ14, IJ15, IJ16, IJ19, IJ21, IJ23, IJ25, IJ26
No nozzle plate	Various methods have been tried to eliminate the nozzles entirely, to prevent nozzle clogging. These include thermal bubble mechanisms and acoustic lens mechanisms	No nozzles to become clogged	Difficult to control drop position accurately Crosstalk problems	Ricoh 1995 Sekiya et al U.S. Pat. No. 5,412,413 1993 Hadimioglu et al EUP 550,192 1993 Elrod et al EUP 572,220
Trough	Each drop ejector has a trough through which a paddle moves. There is no nozzle plate.	Reduced manufacturing complexity Monolithic	Drop firing direction is sensitive to wicking.	IJ35
Nozzle slit instead of individual nozzles	The elimination of nozzle holes and replacement by a slit encompassing many actuator positions reduces nozzle clogging, but increases crosstalk due to ink surface waves	No nozzles to become clogged	Difficult to control drop position accurately Crosstalk problems	1989 Saito et al U.S. Pat. No. 4,799,068

<u>DROP EJECTION DIRECTION</u>				
Description	Advantages	Disadvantages	Examples	
Edge ('edge shooter')	Ink flow is along the surface of the chip, and ink drops are ejected from the chip edge.	Simple construction No silicon etching required Good heat sinking via substrate Mechanically strong Ease of chip handling	Nozzles limited to edge High resolution is difficult Fast color printing requires one print head per color	Canon Bubblejet 1979 Endo et al GB patent 2,007,162 Xerox heater-in-pit 1990 Hawkins et al U.S. Pat. No. 4,899,181 Tone-jet
Surface ('roof shooter')	Ink flow is along the surface of the chip, and ink drops are ejected from the chip surface, normal to the plane of the chip.	No bulk silicon etching required Silicon can make an effective heat sink Mechanical strength	Maximum ink flow is severely restricted	Hewlett-Packard TIJ 1982 Vaught et al U.S. Pat. No. 4,490,728 IJ02, IJ11, IJ12, IJ20, IJ22
Through chip, forward ('up shooter')	Ink flow is through the chip, and ink drops are ejected from the front surface of the chip.	High ink flow Suitable for pagewidth print heads High nozzle packing density therefore low manufacturing cost	Requires bulk silicon etching	Silverbrook, EP 0771 658 A2 and related patent applications IJ04, IJ17, IJ18, IJ24, IJ27-IJ45

-continued

<u>DROP EJECTION DIRECTION</u>				
	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages	Examples
Through chip, reverse ('down shooter')	Ink flow is through the chip, and ink drops are ejected from the rear surface of the chip.	High ink flow Suitable for pagewidth print heads High nozzle packing density therefore low manufacturing cost	Requires wafer thinning Requires special handling during manufacture	IJ01, IJ03, IJ05, IJ06, IJ07, IJ08, IJ09, IJ10, IJ13, IJ14, IJ15, IJ16, IJ19, IJ21, IJ23, IJ25, IJ26
Through actuator	Ink flow is through the actuator, which is not fabricated as part of the same substrate as the drive transistors.	Suitable for piezoelectric print heads	Pagewidth print heads require several thousand connections to drive circuits Cannot be manufactured in standard CMOS fabs Complex assembly required	Epson Stylus Tektronix hot melt piezoelectric ink jets

<u>INK TYPE</u>				
	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages	Examples
Aqueous, dye	Water based ink which typically contains: water, dye, surfactant, humectant, and biocide. Modern ink dyes have high water-fastness, light fastness	Environmentally friendly No odor	Slow drying Corrosive Bleeds on paper May strikethrough Cockles paper	Most existing ink jets All IJ series ink jets Silverbrook, EP 0771 658 A2 and related patent applications
Aqueous, pigment	Water based ink which typically contains: water, pigment, surfactant, humectant, and biocide. Pigments have an advantage in reduced bleed, wicking and strikethrough.	Environmentally friendly No odor Reduced bleed Reduced wicking Reduced strikethrough	Slow drying Corrosive Pigment may clog nozzles Pigment may clog actuator mechanisms Cockles paper	IJ02, IJ04, IJ21, IJ26, IJ27, IJ30 Silverbrook, EP 0771 658 A2 and related patent applications Piezoelectric ink-jets Thermal ink jets (with significant restrictions)
Methyl Ethyl Ketone (MEK)	MEK is a highly volatile solvent used for industrial printing on difficult surfaces such as aluminum cans.	Very fast drying Prints on various substrates such as metals and plastics	Odorous Flammable	All IJ series ink jets
Alcohol (ethanol, 2-butanol, and others)	Alcohol based inks can be used where the printer must operate at temperatures below the freezing point of water. An example of this is in-camera consumer photographic printing.	Fast drying Operates at sub-freezing temperatures Reduced paper cockle Low cost	Slight odor Flammable	All IJ series ink jets
Phase change (hot melt)	The ink is solid at room temperature, and is melted in the print head before jetting. Hot melt inks are usually wax based, with a melting point around 80° C. After jetting the ink freezes almost instantly upon contacting the print medium or a transfer	No drying time-ink instantly freezes on the print medium Almost any print medium can be used No paper cockle occurs No wicking occurs No bleed occurs No strikethrough occurs	High viscosity Printed ink typically has a 'waxy' feel Printed pages may 'block' Ink temperature may be above the curie point of permanent magnets Ink heaters consume power	Tektronix hot melt piezoelectric ink jets 1989 Nowak U.S. Pat. No. 4,820,346 All IJ series ink jets

-continued

<u>INK TYPE</u>				
Description	Advantages	Disadvantages	Examples	
	roller.			
Oil	Oil based inks are extensively used in offset printing. They have advantages in improved characteristics on paper (especially no wicking or cockle). Oil soluble dyes and pigments are required.	High solubility medium for some dyes Does not cockle paper Does not wick through paper	Long warm-up time High viscosity: this is a significant limitation for use in ink jets, which usually require a low viscosity. Some short chain and multi-branched oils have a sufficiently low viscosity. Slow drying	All IJ series ink jets
Microemulsion	A microemulsion is a stable, self forming emulsion of oil, water, and surfactant. The characteristic drop size is less than 100 nm, and is determined by the preferred curvature of the surfactant.	Stops ink bleed High dye solubility Water, oil, and amphiphilic soluble dyes can be used Can stabilize pigment suspensions	Viscosity higher than water Cost is slightly higher than water based ink High surfactant concentration required (around 5%)	All IJ series ink jets

I claim:

1. A nozzle assembly for an inkjet printer, the assembly comprising:

- a wafer arrangement defining an ink supply channel;
- a border constructed on the wafer arrangement and bounding the ink supply channel;
- a cover layer constructed on the border to define a nozzle chamber, the cover layer defining an ink ejection port; and
- a shutter arrangement constructed on the wafer arrangement and within the border, the shutter arrangement comprising a thermal actuator which terminates in a shutter, the thermal actuator comprising a coiled heater which, in use, can move the shutter with respect to the ink ejection port.

2. A nozzle assembly as claimed in claim 1, wherein the coiled heater comprises a serpentine heating element sandwiched between a pair of polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE) layers.

3. A nozzle assembly as claimed in claim 1, further comprising:

an ink reservoir which is in fluid communication with the ink supply channel; and
an ultrasonic transducer positioned in the reservoir.

4. A nozzle assembly as claimed in claim 1, wherein the ultrasonic transducer is a piezoelectric transducer which oscillates at approximately 100 kHz.

5. A nozzle assembly as claimed in claim 1, wherein the wafer arrangement comprises a silicon wafer, a Complementary Metal Oxide Semiconductor (CMOS) layer constructed on the silicon wafer and comprising CMOS circuitry, and a nitride layer constructed on top of the CMOS layer.

6. A nozzle assembly as claimed in claim 1, wherein the border and cover layers are formed from nitride material.

7. A nozzle assembly as claimed in claim 1, wherein the ink supply channel is wider than the ejection port.

8. A nozzle assembly as claimed in claim 1, wherein the shutter arrangement is arranged so that the shutter is normally in alignment with the ink ejection port and, upon actuation of the thermal actuator, is moved out of alignment with the ink ejection port by uncoiling the coiled heater.

* * * * *